

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a brief explanation of some theories that support the study. The theories are related to the impacts of extensive reading on students' vocabulary mastery.

2.1. Vocabulary in Language Learning

2.1.1. Definition of Vocabulary in Language Learning

One of the most important components of language learning and development is vocabulary. Learners can comprehend, use, and react to language in both spoken and written forms when they have mastered vocabulary. According to Susanto (2017), vocabulary learning plays a vital role in foreign language education, as the meaning of new words is frequently emphasized in both textbooks and verbal communication. Learners need to have a sufficient vocabulary base before they may become proficient in a second language. Vocabulary is more than just a list of words; it is essential to creating meaning, communicating concepts, and comprehending context.

Pradina and Listyani (2021) explain that vocabulary refers to a list or collection of words in a particular language that speakers use to convey ideas, thoughts, and emotions. Vocabulary mastery in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) encompasses both productive (using words in speaking and writing) and receptive (understanding words in reading and listening) dimensions. To facilitate meaningful conversation and active language use, both elements are necessary. Students who don't have a large enough vocabulary may find it challenging to understand texts or express themselves clearly.

Moreover, Alqahtani (2015) emphasizes that vocabulary knowledge is a critical tool for second language learners, as limited vocabulary can hinder communication success. In order to participate in productive communication and comprehension, secondary students in particular must build a sizable and useful vocabulary. Communication

breakdowns, poor reading fluency, and a lack of confidence in written and spoken English can all result from vocabulary shortages. Conversely, kids who have a large vocabulary are more equipped to comprehend academic content, engage in discussions, and articulate themselves clearly.

In essence, vocabulary is a fundamental component in English language learning that plays an important role in students' ability to comprehend and use language effectively. For Junior High School students as EFL learners, adequate vocabulary mastery is essential to support communication, reading comprehension, and language use. However, limited vocabulary often causes difficulties in understanding texts and expressing ideas clearly, which makes teaching English vocabulary a challenging task for teachers. Therefore, it is important to investigate the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English vocabulary and identify appropriate solutions to cope with these challenges, in line with the focus of this study.

2.1.2. Types of Vocabulary

Effective communication relies on an individual's ability to recognize and use appropriate vocabulary. Receptive (passive) and productive (active) vocabulary kinds, which correspond to various language skills (listening, reading vs. speaking, writing), are frequently used to characterize vocabulary knowledge in contemporary literature. According to Ha (2021), receptive vocabulary encompasses the words learners can recognize and understand during listening or reading, while productive vocabulary refers to the words that learners can actively produce correctly in speaking or writing.

Moreover, a study by Chorena and Pupung (2022) found that in higher-education contexts receptive vocabulary size tends to be larger than productive vocabulary size, indicating that many words remain passive unless learners are provided with opportunities to use them in production tasks. Vocabulary can be further divided into four categories

based on linguistic modalities: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Teachers can target effective teaching and learning strategies for various skills with the use of this category.

2.2. Teaching English Vocabulary

Dealing with the development of curriculum in Indonesia, teaching English vocabulary has become essential every year. However, teaching vocabulary is not always an easy task. Teaching English should be started at a young age because young learners are very effective at their age (Mwalongo, 2016; Ratminingsih & Budasi, 2018). In language learning, mastery of vocabulary is crucial. However, in Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language, vocabulary is often taught incidentally and given little priority.

Teaching vocabulary is important in language acquisition. Vocabulary is one element to link the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Vocabulary mastery is a crucial aspect for language learners in acquiring a second language, as it signifies their comprehension of the language. Defined as the ability to recognize and articulate the meanings of words, vocabulary mastery is vital across all language skills in L2 education (Hiebert & Michale, 2005, as cited in Dalimunthe & Haryadi, 2022). According to Viera (2017), vocabulary is essential for understanding both written and spoken texts, enabling learners to grasp specific concepts. Furthermore, vocabulary mastery is indispensable for effective second language learning. Vocabulary does not only play a significant role in comprehending and using English correctly but is also an area where many students struggle (Segler et al., 2002). Despite its importance in facilitating effective language acquisition, vocabulary learning often receives insufficient emphasis in teaching practices. Students are frequently expected to independently acquire vocabulary through their own efforts (de Groot, 2006; Jo, 2018; Zakaria, 2005; Zimmerman, 1997), resulting in a lack of focus on vocabulary mastery within language classrooms. The challenges associated with learning vocabulary are significant for English language learners. Nation (2013) highlights that learners' difficulties in

becoming proficient vocabulary users hinder their overall language acquisition. A study by Hasan and Selamat (2017) indicated that vocabulary activities ranked fourth among nine evaluated activities in ESL classes. Thus, while vocabulary learning presents substantial challenges, these can be addressed through individual motivation and interest in self-directed language acquisition.

In teaching English vocabulary, teachers are required to apply systematic instructional procedures to help students understand and retain new words effectively. One commonly used approach involves several stages, including introducing new vocabulary, providing clear meanings and pronunciation, giving contextual examples, and engaging students in practice activities. According to Nation (2017), effective vocabulary teaching should include three main processes: noticing (introducing new words), retrieval (recalling vocabulary through repetition), and creative use (applying words in meaningful contexts). Similarly, Schmitt (2020) stated that vocabulary instruction should involve repeated exposure, explicit explanation, and opportunities for learners to use words productively in speaking and writing. This is also in line with Webb and Nation (2020), who emphasized that teachers should design vocabulary instruction that integrates form, meaning, and use to ensure deeper learning.

Therefore, effective vocabulary instruction should be guided by clear principles of teaching vocabulary as follows:

1. Meaningful Learning

Vocabulary learning should be meaningful, where words are presented in context rather than in isolation, allowing students to understand how vocabulary is used in real communication. This approach is supported by Matenova (2023), who stated that contextualized vocabulary instruction enhances learners' understanding and retention.

2. Active Learner Involvement

Another important principle is active learner involvement, as students tend to acquire vocabulary more effectively when they are actively engaged in

using words through various classroom activities. Sandy and Bram (2024) also emphasized that interactive and engagement-based teaching principles significantly improve students' vocabulary learning outcomes.

3. Repeated Exposure, Meaningful use, and Integration of form

In addition, vocabulary teaching should consider principles such as repeated exposure, meaningful use, and integration of form, meaning, and use to ensure deeper vocabulary acquisition. According to Nation (2017), effective vocabulary learning occurs when learners repeatedly encounter words and use them in meaningful contexts.

Furthermore, these principles may vary depending on students' age and proficiency level. Younger or lower-level learners tend to benefit more from visual support, simple context, and game-based activities, while more advanced learners require deeper processing through contextual analysis, discussion, and productive language use (Schmitt, 2020). Thus, applying appropriate and adaptive principles in teaching vocabulary is essential to support students' language learning.

In addition to the principle, teachers need to apply suitable techniques in teaching English vocabulary to improve students' understanding and retention. Various techniques such as games, interactive activities, and contextual teaching through short texts, dialogues, and daily conversations can facilitate vocabulary learning. According to Pratiwi et al. (2025), game-based vocabulary instruction positively influences students' motivation and vocabulary mastery. Similarly, Sangia (2022) stated that teaching vocabulary through contextual and interactive techniques helps learners understand word meaning and usage more naturally. By implementing appropriate techniques, teachers can create an engaging learning environment and address challenges commonly encountered in teaching English vocabulary.

2.3. Challenges in Teaching Vocabulary

Boakye and Ampliah (2017) conducted a study investigating the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English vocabulary and found that many teachers relied heavily on traditional instructional approaches, such as

direct translation and memorization, with limited student engagement. Their findings revealed that insufficient instructional resources, limited teacher training, and large class sizes contributed significantly to ineffective vocabulary instruction. As a result, students tended to become passive learners and showed low motivation in vocabulary learning. This is in line with Boakye and Ampliah (2017) who emphasized that without interactive and context-based vocabulary teaching strategies, students struggle to internalize new words meaningfully.

Furthermore, the study highlighted that teachers often encountered difficulties in selecting appropriate techniques to make vocabulary learning more communicative and engaging. The lack of varied strategies reduced opportunities for students to practice vocabulary actively in meaningful contexts. According to Boakye and Ampliah (2017), effective vocabulary teaching requires strategic planning, contextual exposure, and consistent reinforcement to ensure long-term retention. These findings are highly relevant to the present study, as this research also investigates teachers' challenges and the solutions implemented to overcome difficulties in teaching English vocabulary at the junior high school level.

In general, vocabulary teaching is often perceived as uninteresting and monotonous because of its delivery through rigid and repetitive methods. Liu (2022) states that there is no significant change in the vocabulary teaching model, indicating that many classrooms still apply conventional approaches. Similarly, Gao (2015) explains that vocabulary instruction tends to be too rigid to attract students' interest because teachers are not proficient in applying a variety of flexible teaching approaches. This situation supports the findings of Boakye and Ampliah (2017), who observed that limited instructional variation leads to passive classroom environments and reduced student engagement.

Moreover, Yu (2022) emphasizes the importance of implementing effective vocabulary learning strategies to enhance acquisition, yet many teachers fail to apply diverse techniques consistently. The repeated use of the same strategies may result in student boredom and decreased participation. In

addition, Nation (2013) stated that learners often face difficulties in memorizing new words, including remembering pronunciation and spelling, which can hinder their ability to use vocabulary effectively in communication. These challenges demonstrate that vocabulary learning is not merely about memorization but requires meaningful exposure, repeated practice, and strategic instruction. Therefore, understanding these challenges becomes essential in identifying practical and pedagogically sound solutions, as explored in this study.

2.4. Solution for Challenges in Teaching English Vocabulary

Boakye and Ampliah (2017) emphasized that overcoming challenges in vocabulary teaching requires a shift from traditional, teacher-centered instruction to more interactive and learner-centered approaches. Their study revealed that teachers who incorporated contextualized vocabulary instruction, group activities, and meaningful practice were more successful in increasing students' engagement and retention. This is in line with Boakye and Ampliah (2017), who stated that vocabulary learning becomes more effective when students are actively involved in using new words in communicative contexts rather than merely memorizing word lists.

Furthermore, Boakye and Ampliah (2017) highlighted the importance of teacher preparedness and pedagogical competence in selecting appropriate instructional strategies. They found that teachers who continuously adapted their methods based on classroom challenges were better able to create supportive learning environments. These findings are relevant to the present study, as this research also explores how teachers at the junior high school level implement practical solutions to address vocabulary teaching challenges in their specific classroom contexts.

The role of the English teacher is crucial in fostering vocabulary development. Teachers need to proactively inspire students and ensure they grasp fundamental vocabulary concepts while employing creative and flexible teaching strategies to maintain student interest. As noted by Evan & Lang (as cited in Lelawati et al., 2019), an effective teaching method can become

ineffective if the teacher lacks the necessary skills to implement it properly. This suggests that teacher competence plays a central role in determining the success of vocabulary instruction.

According to Isaac (2010), a teaching strategy is a comprehensive plan that includes lesson structure, instructional goals, and systematic tactics for implementation. Similarly, Brown (2007) describes strategy as a particular approach to solving problems and achieving specific goals in learning. These perspectives reinforce the importance of carefully selecting and organizing instructional techniques to meet students' needs. In addition, Bremner (2008) posits that educators should adopt an artistic approach to teaching, guiding students to become independent and effective learners.

Teaching vocabulary extends beyond merely introducing new terms (Harmer, 2001). Vocabulary learning requires repeated exposure, contextual usage, and reinforcement. However, not all vocabulary can be acquired solely through discovery-based methods, as some degree of memorization remains necessary. Therefore, combining structured strategies with interactive approaches becomes essential in addressing classroom challenges.

Hence, various studies have identified challenges in teaching English vocabulary along with practical solutions to overcome them. Applying student-centered strategies and matching teaching techniques with available classroom resources can enhance motivation and engagement. In line with these theoretical perspectives and previous findings, the present study investigates teachers' challenges in teaching English vocabulary and the solutions they implement in one of the junior high schools in Tasikmalaya.

2.5. Study of Relevant Research

Prior to commencing the present research, the researcher extensively reviewed a previous study that aimed to tackle the challenges of teaching English to young learners in a Junior high school setting and the solutions proposed. This specific inquiry was conducted because of its relevance to the current research topic, as there is limited research on the junior high school level.

Khulel (2021) investigated six participants from six elementary schools in five villages (Gajah, Gunungsari, Tulungagung, Selorejo, and Blongsong) to find out some difficulties that English teachers face when teaching English to elementary students in rustic primary schools in Baureno, East Java, with the findings there are three difficulties: (i) Students' socio-economics condition, (ii) the status of English in the school, and (iii) Covid-19 pandemic.

Another relevant investigation conducted by Widodo and Dewi (2019) entitled *Revealing Problems on Teaching English for Young Learners At Al – Azhar 55 Islamic Primary School Yogyakarta and How to Solve Them* revealed that issues occurred during the teaching and learning process, and the teachers addressed and resolved them. The first issue was the students' lack of self-control during the instruction and learning process. (2) the range of English proficiency among students, (3) the challenge of forming habits to speak English on a regular basis, and (4) less parental assistance. On the other hand, the answers included (1) using the Class Dojo app, (2) offering the preparatory course, (3) getting support and help from friends and teachers, and (4) engaging in hands-on learning.

The study conducted by Mirzaakhmedova and Riskiboyeva (2022) aimed to dissect the roots of problems related to obstacles faced by teachers in the process of teaching English to young learners. The finding revealed that children do not have access to the same supportive environment for interaction when learning a second language as they do when learning their first, which poses numerous significant challenges. Like while studying their home language, children must have the opportunity to actively engage in rich, dynamic communicative activities in foreign language classes. Thus, teachers must pay attention to the need for skilful instruction. The most difficult of all is making simultaneous instruction in both the foreign language and the student's native tongue mandatory. The teacher needs to introduce a new language every lesson, but the students do not understand what it means. In many regions of the world, large classes are a regular difficulty. As a result, teachers may feel that implementing learner-centred teaching is impossible or

very difficult, as they may not be able to closely monitor students' language use or do pair and group work. The issue of discipline and control is another one, especially in communities where calm, well-organized classrooms are valued. It might sometimes be challenging to inspire students.

Based on the reviewed studies, it can be concluded that previous research has mainly focused on the challenges of teaching English to young learners at the elementary level and in broader EFL contexts. Khulel (2021) emphasized external factors such as students' socio-economic conditions, school policy, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, while Widodo and Dewi (2019) highlighted classroom management issues, differences in students' proficiency levels, and limited parental support along with several practical solutions. Meanwhile, Mirzaakhmedova and Riskiboyeva (2022) discussed pedagogical challenges related to classroom environment, large class size, and the difficulty of implementing learner-centered instruction. However, these studies have not specifically examined the challenges of teaching English vocabulary at the junior high school level, nor have they focused on vocabulary instruction as a distinct component of language teaching. Therefore, there is a research gap concerning how teachers face and address challenges in teaching English vocabulary in junior high school classrooms. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating teachers' challenges in teaching English vocabulary and identifying the solutions used to cope with these challenges in the junior high school context.