

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Description of Basic Theory

1. Vocabulary in English Language Learning

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language learning because it serves as the foundation for both understanding and producing language. It enables learners to interpret messages, convey ideas, and participate effectively in communication. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge does not merely involve knowing the meaning of words; rather, it includes a deeper understanding of how words are pronounced, spelled, and used appropriately in various contexts. This means that learners must be able to recognize words in spoken and written forms, understand their meanings in different situations, and apply them accurately in communication. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners are likely to face significant difficulties in comprehending texts, following spoken instructions, and expressing their thoughts clearly and effectively.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), vocabulary mastery plays a crucial role in supporting the development of the four primary

language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A limited vocabulary can hinder students' ability to understand spoken language, interpret written texts, and produce meaningful spoken or written communication. Furthermore, vocabulary knowledge helps learners build confidence in using English, as they are better equipped to express their ideas and interact with others. Wilkins emphasizes the importance of vocabulary by stating that while grammar is important, vocabulary is far more essential for conveying meaning, as "without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." This statement clearly underlines the central role of vocabulary in communication, indicating that even if learners have a good understanding of grammatical structures, communication will not be effective without adequate vocabulary. Therefore, mastering vocabulary is a key aspect of successful language learning and should be given significant attention in the teaching and learning process. (Uddin, 2022)

B. Aspects of Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary mastery is a complex ability that involves several interconnected aspects. Learners are not only required to know the meaning of words, but also to understand how words are formed, pronounced, and used appropriately in different contexts. According to Hatch and

Brown (1995), there are several key aspects that must be considered in mastering vocabulary.

1. Word Meaning.

Word meaning is the most fundamental aspect of vocabulary mastery. It refers to learners' ability to understand what a word means, both in isolation and within a specific context. However, understanding word meaning is not always simple, as many English words have more than one meaning (polysemy), and their meanings can change depending on the context.

For example, the word "bank" can have different meanings:

- a. I put my money in the bank. (financial institution)
- b. He sat on the river bank. (side of a river)

This shows that learners must be able to interpret meaning based on context, not just memorize definitions. In addition, learners should also understand synonyms (words with similar meanings), such as big and large, and antonyms (words with opposite meanings), such as hot and cold. A deeper understanding of word meaning allows learners to use vocabulary more flexibly and accurately.

2. Pronunciation.

Pronunciation refers to the way a word is spoken, including its sounds, stress patterns, and intonation.

Mastering pronunciation is important because incorrect pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings in communication.

For example:

- a. The word “*record*” can be pronounced differently depending on its function:

REcord (noun) → a thing

reCORD (verb) → an action

- b. Another example is the difference between:

ship /ʃɪp/

sheep /ʃi:p/

Although the difference is small, it can change the meaning completely. This aspect is often challenging for EFL learners because English sounds may not exist in their first language. Therefore, learners need continuous practice in listening and speaking to improve their pronunciation.

3. Spelling

Spelling is the ability to write words correctly. It is a crucial aspect of vocabulary mastery, especially in written communication. English spelling can be difficult because there is often no direct relationship between pronunciation and spelling.

1) For example:

enough → pronounced /ɪˈnʌf/

through → pronounced /θruː/

knight → the letter “k” is silent

These inconsistencies make it challenging for learners to remember how words are written. Errors in spelling can affect the clarity of written communication and may lead to misunderstandings. Therefore, learners need repeated exposure and practice, such as writing exercises, to improve their spelling accuracy.

4. Word Use

Word use refers to the ability to use vocabulary appropriately in sentences. This includes understanding grammar, collocation, and context.

a. Grammatical Use

Learners must know how a word functions in a sentence.

Example:

She decided to study. (correct verb form)

She decision to study. (incorrect)

b. Collocation

Collocation refers to words that commonly occur together.

Examples:

Correct: make a decision

Incorrect: do a decision

Correct: strong coffee

Incorrect: powerful coffee

c. Contextual Appropriateness

where a word should be used (formal vs informal).

Examples:

Formal: children

Informal: kids

Using the wrong word in the wrong context may sound unnatural or inappropriate.

5. Word Form (Morphology)

Word form refers to the different forms of a word, including prefixes, suffixes, and word classes. Understanding word formation helps learners expand their vocabulary more effectively.

Examples:

Happy = unhappy (prefix)

Teach = teacher (suffix)

Care = careful = carefully

Learners who understand word formation can guess meanings of new words more easily.

Complementing the aspects discussed above, Norbert Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that vocabulary

mastery also involves two important dimensions, namely receptive knowledge and productive knowledge. Receptive knowledge refers to learners' ability to recognize and understand words when they encounter them in listening or reading activities, while productive knowledge refers to their ability to actively use those words accurately in speaking and writing. These two types of knowledge are closely related but differ in terms of complexity, as productive knowledge generally requires a deeper level of understanding than receptive knowledge.

The development of both receptive and productive vocabulary does not occur instantly; rather, it progresses gradually through repeated exposure, meaningful practice, and consistent use in various contexts. Learners need to encounter words multiple times and apply them actively in order to achieve full mastery. Without sufficient exposure and practice, vocabulary knowledge tends to remain passive and may not develop into active use. For this reason, vocabulary mastery should be understood as a continuous and dynamic process that requires time, effort, and meaningful engagement with the language, both inside and outside the classroom.

C. Factors Affecting Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary learning is influenced by a variety of factors that can either support or hinder students' progress. These factors can generally be classified into linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors.

1. Linguistic Factors

Linguistic factors are related to the nature of the language itself. According to Paul Nation (2001), one of the main difficulties in vocabulary learning is the complexity of word knowledge. Learners must deal with various aspects such as meaning, pronunciation, spelling, and usage at the same time.

One important linguistic factor is the difference between the first language (L1) and the target language (L2). When English vocabulary differs significantly from students' native language in terms of structure, sound, or meaning, learning becomes more difficult. For example, differences in pronunciation systems often cause learners to mispronounce words.

Another factor is word complexity, including length, form, and grammatical category. Long or unfamiliar words are generally more difficult to learn and remember. In addition, words with multiple meanings or irregular forms can create confusion for learners.

Furthermore, limited vocabulary exposure can also be considered a linguistic factor. When students are not frequently exposed to English words in meaningful contexts, they tend to forget vocabulary more easily. Repeated exposure is essential for strengthening memory and understanding.

2. Non-Linguistic Factors

Non-linguistic factors refer to external and internal conditions that influence the learning process.

One of the most important factors is motivation. Students who have high motivation are more likely to engage actively in learning vocabulary, practice regularly, and seek opportunities to improve their skills. On the other hand, students with low motivation may show less interest and effort in learning new words.

Another factor is learning strategies. Students use different strategies to learn vocabulary, such as memorization, repetition, note-taking, or using words in sentences. Ineffective strategies may hinder vocabulary acquisition, while appropriate strategies can significantly improve learning outcomes.

Teaching methods also play a crucial role. Teachers who use varied and interactive techniques such as games, discussions, and contextual learning can help students understand and remember vocabulary more

effectively. In contrast, monotonous teaching methods may reduce students' interest and engagement.

And then, learning environment influences vocabulary learning. In EFL contexts, students often have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. This lack of practice can slow down vocabulary development and reduce students' confidence in using the language.

Last thing, psychological factors, such as anxiety and self-confidence, also affect vocabulary learning. Students who feel anxious or afraid of making mistakes may avoid using new vocabulary, which limits their learning opportunities. Conversely, confident students are more willing to practice and experiment with new words.

D. Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary mastery refers to learners' ability to understand, remember, and appropriately use words in communication. It is not only limited to recognizing the meaning of words, but also involves the ability to use them accurately and effectively in both spoken and written forms. According to Hatch and Brown (1995), vocabulary mastery includes several important aspects, such as word meaning, pronunciation, spelling, and word usage. This indicates that learners need to have a comprehensive understanding of each

word, including how it sounds, how it is written, and how it functions within different contexts. Learners are considered to have good vocabulary mastery when they are able to recognize words easily, understand their meanings correctly, pronounce them accurately, and use them appropriately in meaningful sentences. Therefore, vocabulary mastery can be seen as a complex skill that requires both knowledge and practical ability in language use.

Furthermore, Norbert Schmitt (2000) explains that vocabulary mastery develops gradually through repeated exposure and meaningful use. This suggests that learning vocabulary is not an instant process, but rather a continuous and long-term effort that requires consistent practice and reinforcement. Learners need to encounter words multiple times in different contexts in order to fully understand and retain them in their memory. In addition, meaningful use of vocabulary, such as applying words in real communication, plays a significant role in strengthening learners' mastery. However, this process often becomes challenging for learners, especially in EFL contexts where opportunities to use English outside the classroom are limited. As a result, many learners struggle to retain new vocabulary and to use it confidently in communication. Therefore, continuous exposure, practice, and effective learning strategies are

essential to support the development of vocabulary mastery.(Tiansoodeenon et al., 2023)

E. Student's Difficulties in Mastering Vocabulary

Students' difficulties in mastering vocabulary refer to the problems or obstacles faced by learners in acquiring, understanding, and using new words effectively in communication. These difficulties are not only related to the number of words students know, but also to how well they can remember, understand, and apply those words in appropriate contexts. In the process of learning a foreign language, vocabulary acquisition can be particularly challenging because it requires learners to deal with various aspects of language simultaneously. According to Paul Nation (2001), learners commonly experience difficulties in understanding word meanings, retaining vocabulary in their memory, and using words accurately in different contexts. This indicates that vocabulary learning involves complex cognitive processes, such as memorization, comprehension, and contextual application, which can be difficult for many students to manage effectively.

In addition, Scott Thornbury (2002) identifies several common difficulties in vocabulary learning, including problems related to pronunciation, spelling, and word choice. These aspects are essential in developing vocabulary mastery, yet they often become sources of confusion for

learners. For example, students may find it difficult to pronounce unfamiliar English words correctly due to differences in sound systems between English and their first language. Similarly, irregular spelling patterns in English can make it challenging for learners to remember and write words accurately. Difficulties in choosing the correct word for a particular context may also lead to misunderstandings in communication. As a result, these challenges can cause students to feel hesitant or anxious when using English, which in turn reduces their confidence and willingness to participate in communication.

Furthermore, in EFL classroom settings, students often face additional challenges because English vocabulary differs significantly from their first language in terms of form, meaning, and usage. Differences in grammatical structure, word formation, and cultural context can make it harder for learners to fully understand and use new vocabulary appropriately. Limited exposure to English outside the classroom also contributes to these difficulties, as students have fewer opportunities to practice and reinforce what they have learned. Consequently, many students struggle to develop strong vocabulary mastery, highlighting the need for effective teaching strategies and continuous practice to support their learning process. (As & Apoko, 2023)

F. Type of Vocabulary Difficulties Theory :

1. As & Apoko, 2023 Difficulties in Mastering Vocabulary

Based on previous studies and theories, students' vocabulary difficulties can be categorized into several aspects:(As & Apoko, 2023)

a. Difficulties in understanding word meaning.

Students may have trouble identifying the meaning of words, especially when words have multiple meanings or are used in different contexts

b. Difficulties in pronunciation.

English pronunciation often differs from its spelling, which can cause confusion for learners and lead to incorrect pronunciation.

c. Difficulties in spelling.

Many students struggle with spelling English words correctly due to inconsistent spelling rules.

d. Difficulties in using vocabulary in context.

Students may know the meaning of a word but find it difficult to use it appropriately in sentences or real communication.

e. Difficulties in remembering vocabulary.

Remembering newly learned vocabulary is another common difficulty, especially when students lack regular practice and repetition.

2. As & Apoko, 2023 Factor Difficulties in Mastering Vocabulary

1. Internal Factors

Internal factors that emphasize students' linguistic limitations as well as psychological and cognitive barriers that arise from within the learners themselves.

a. Linguistic Factors (Word Characteristics)

Students experience difficulties due to the fundamental nature and complexity of the English language itself, which is very different from their native language (Indonesian).

b. Pronunciation

English is a non-phonetic language (what is written differs from what is spoken). Students have difficulty pronouncing words that contain silent letters or vowel sounds that do not exist in Indonesian phonology.

c. Spelling

Students often make spelling errors due to words that sound the same but are spelled differently, or because of irregular verb and noun forms.

d. Meaning

Students have difficulty understanding that a single word can change meaning depending on its part of speech or the context of the sentence.

2. External Factor

External factors that focus on the ecosystem outside the student, which fails to support the accelerated acquisition of new vocabulary.

a. Pedagogical Factors (Classroom Teaching Process)

Monotonous Teaching Methods: Teachers still predominantly use rote learning methods. Instruction is non-interactive and teacher-centered.

b. Limitations of Learning Media

A lack of variety in the use of creative visual, audio, or digital media that can help students visualize the meanings of abstract words.

c. Sociocultural Factors

Lack of Language Exposure: Since English is classified as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia, students lack an environment to

practice this vocabulary outside of school hours.

d. Lack of Motivation and Interest

The absence of encouragement or resources from parents or the home environment to prompt children to interact with English-language materials.

G. Vocabulary Learning in EFL Context

In EFL contexts such as Indonesia, English is rarely used outside the classroom, which may limit students' exposure to vocabulary. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), limited exposure and practice can significantly affect learners' vocabulary development. As a result, students often rely heavily on classroom instruction, making the role of teachers and teaching strategies essential in helping students overcome vocabulary difficulties.

Understanding students' vocabulary difficulties is therefore important to improve the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching and learning. By identifying the types of difficulties students face, teachers can design more appropriate learning activities that support vocabulary acquisition.(Irawan, 2023)

This research is deemed important due to the anticipated contributions and advantages derived from its findings. The study is projected to offer value in both theoretical and

applied aspects, with a particular emphasis on English language pedagogy and acquisition, specifically concerning vocabulary proficiency.

By investigating the effectiveness of multimodal approaches to vocabulary learning in an EFL context, this study adds to the current literature. Our aim is to objectively evaluate the impact of conventional approaches and technological tools, and to contribute to the discussion on the best ways to teach vocabulary to EFL learners. Methods: 20-25 EFL students with intermediate to advanced proficiency levels participated in a comprehensive vocabulary enhancement program.

The strategies used included:

- a. Digital Learning Platforms: Using tools for daily vocabulary practice, such as Quizizz and Duolingo.
- b. Active Recall and Spaced Repetition: Using Anki spaced repetition software and physical flashcards to implement the Leitner approach.
- c. Media Immersion: Consistent exposure to English-language books, films, and podcasts.
- d. Weekly sessions dedicated to reviewing newly learned vocabulary, known as systematic vocabulary review.
- e. Direct Application: Encouraging the use of newly learned vocabulary in written and spoken tasks.

H. Vocabulary Teaching in EFL

In EFL contexts such as Indonesia, vocabulary teaching plays an important role in helping students develop their English skills. Since English is rarely used in daily communication outside the classroom, students often rely heavily on teachers and classroom activities to learn new vocabulary. According to Jack C. Richards and Willy A. Renandya (2002), effective vocabulary teaching should provide students with sufficient exposure, meaningful practice, and opportunities to use words in different contexts. Without appropriate teaching strategies, students may experience difficulties in understanding, remembering, and using vocabulary correctly.

Vocabulary teaching should not only focus on memorizing word meanings, but also on helping students understand pronunciation, spelling, and word usage. Teachers are expected to create engaging learning activities that encourage students to actively use vocabulary in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to Scott Thornbury (2002), repeated exposure and meaningful use of words are essential in developing vocabulary mastery.

To support vocabulary learning, teachers can use various strategies, such as digital learning platforms, active recall techniques, and spaced repetition, as well as introducing students to English-language media such as

books, movies, songs, and podcasts. These strategies can help students expand their vocabulary and encourage them to use English with greater confidence when communicating.

I. Vocabulary Learning in School

Vocabulary learning in school is an important part of English language education because vocabulary serves as the foundation for developing students' language skills. In the school context, students are expected to acquire sufficient vocabulary to support their ability in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, students may experience difficulties in understanding learning materials, expressing ideas, and participating in communication activities. Therefore, vocabulary learning becomes one of the essential components of English instruction at school.

In schools, vocabulary learning generally takes place through classroom instruction guided by teachers. According to Jack C. Richards and Willy A. Renandya (2002), vocabulary learning should involve meaningful exposure, repetition, and opportunities for students to use words in various contexts. Teachers play an important role in introducing new vocabulary, explaining meanings, and helping students practice pronunciation, spelling, and word usage through different learning activities.

Vocabulary learning in school can be supported through various methods, such as reading texts, classroom discussions, vocabulary exercises, games, and the use of multimedia resources. Teachers may also encourage students to learn vocabulary through songs, videos, or digital learning platforms to make the learning process more engaging. According to Scott Thornbury (2002), repeated exposure and meaningful use of vocabulary are important to help students remember and understand words more effectively.

However, vocabulary learning in school may also present challenges for students, especially in EFL contexts where English is not commonly used outside the classroom. Limited practice opportunities and low exposure to English can make it difficult for students to retain and apply new vocabulary. Therefore, effective teaching strategies and continuous practice are necessary to support students in improving their vocabulary mastery and developing confidence in using English.

J. Relevant Research Result

An examination of pertinent research findings is crucial for summarizing prior investigations into the challenges students encounter when acquiring vocabulary. This section is intended to position the present research within the existing body of work and to highlight that the subject matter under investigation has not been exhaustively addressed,

especially concerning eleventh-grade students at MAN 1 Bengkulu City.

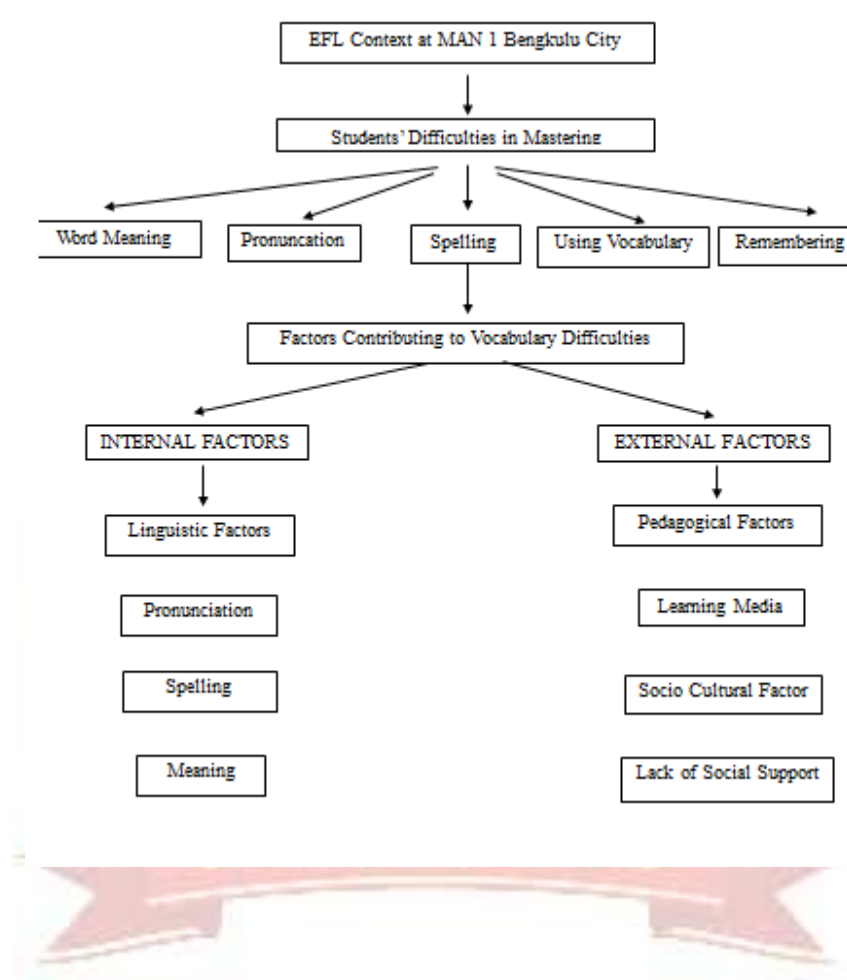
A number of prior investigations have concentrated on the difficulties associated with vocabulary acquisition in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. One such study, explored the obstacles Indonesian senior high school students faced in their English vocabulary learning. The results indicated that students frequently encountered challenges related to comprehending word definitions, retaining vocabulary items, and applying words correctly in written or spoken sentences. Furthermore, the research suggested that insufficient exposure to a wide range of vocabulary and inadequate practice were significant contributors to these challenges. (Rebhi & Hasan, n.d.)

Additionally, performed qualitative research focusing on the vocabulary proficiency of senior high school students. The results revealed that students struggled with the contextual application of vocabulary, particularly in oral and written communication tasks. This research also pointed out a common student tendency to depend significantly on rote memorization, often neglecting a comprehensive grasp of how words operate within syntactic structures, thereby impacting their general language competence. (Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia Jilin International Studies University, Changchun, China 1, n.d.)

Furthermore, a research examined the elements affecting challenges encountered by students in acquiring vocabulary within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. The findings indicated that both intrinsic elements, such as insufficient motivation and restricted pedagogical approaches, and extrinsic elements, including instructional techniques and scarce educational materials, played a role in the difficulties students faced with vocabulary acquisition. This investigation posited that a comprehensive understanding of these student challenges is crucial for the enhancement of vocabulary pedagogy. (Mahamed, 2024)

Subsequent to a review of prior scholarly work, it may be inferred that the obstacles students encounter in achieving proficiency in vocabulary typically encompass issues pertaining to lexical meaning, phonetic articulation, orthography, lexical application, and the consolidation of vocabulary. Nevertheless, the majority of preceding studies were conducted within the context of general senior secondary educational institutions or distinct academic environments. Consequently, research specifically investigating the complexities of vocabulary acquisition among eleventh grade students in Islamic senior secondary schools remains limited, with particular emphasis on MAN 1 Bengkulu.

K. Conceptual Framework Diagram



L. Explanation of the Conceptual Framework :

1. Vocabulary Learning Difficulties in EFL Contexts

In the EFL context at MAN 1 Bengkulu City, students may experience difficulties in mastering English vocabulary due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom. These difficulties become an important issue because vocabulary knowledge is essential for effective English language learning and communication.

2. Types of Vocabulary Learning Difficulties

Students' difficulties in mastering vocabulary are examined through five main aspects: understanding word meanings, pronunciation, spelling, using vocabulary in context, and remembering vocabulary. Difficulties in understanding word meanings occur when students cannot comprehend the meanings of words in different contexts. Pronunciation difficulties refer to problems in pronouncing English words accurately, while spelling difficulties involve errors in writing words correctly. Students may also struggle to use vocabulary appropriately in sentences or communication, even when they know the meanings of the words. In addition, remembering vocabulary becomes challenging when students are unable to retain newly learned words for a long period.

3. Factors Contributing to Vocabulary Learning Difficulties

Various factors may contribute to students' difficulties in mastering English vocabulary. These factors include limited exposure to English, lack of motivation and interest in learning vocabulary, insufficient opportunities to practice English, and teaching methods that may not fully engage students in vocabulary learning. Identifying these factors is important to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by students and to support the development of more effective vocabulary teaching practices.

