

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Concept of Vocabulary

1. Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of second and foreign language learning, as it forms the basis for understanding and producing language. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), vocabulary knowledge is not limited to knowing word meanings but also includes understanding how words function in different contexts. Vocabulary knowledge is viewed as a multidimensional construct that involves knowledge of word form, meaning, and use, indicating that vocabulary mastery requires learners to understand pronunciation, spelling, meaning, and appropriate usage of words in communication (González-Fernández, 2022).

Vocabulary also plays a crucial role in determining learners' overall language proficiency. Vocabulary knowledge significantly influences learners' abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and learners with limited vocabulary often experience difficulties in comprehending texts and expressing ideas effectively, while learners with adequate vocabulary knowledge tend to communicate more fluently and accurately (Katushemerewe, F., & Rugyema, 2025). This

shows that vocabulary functions as a core element supporting the development of other language skills,

In addition, vocabulary learning is influenced by various internal and external factors. Second language vocabulary acquisition is affected by learners' cognitive abilities, learning strategies, exposure to language input, and instructional methods. Vocabulary learning occurs through both intentional learning, such as explicit instruction, and incidental learning, such as encountering new words in meaningful contexts, making vocabulary knowledge dynamic and continuously developing (Z. Chen, 2023).

Recent research trends emphasize vocabulary as a central focus in ESL and EFL studies. Vocabulary learning research highlights the importance of contextualized and meaningful instruction to improve word retention and appropriate usage. Vocabulary is increasingly viewed as active knowledge that develops through repeated exposure, engagement, and practice in authentic learning environments rather than through memorization alone (Atiqah et al., 2025).

Furthermore, vocabulary acquisition involves both receptive and productive dimensions. Vocabulary acquisition includes understanding words in listening and reading activities as well as using words accurately in

speaking and writing. Effective vocabulary learning requires repeated exposure to words and opportunities to apply them in various contexts to achieve deeper understanding and long-term retention (Luisa & García, 2024).

Based on these perspectives, vocabulary can be defined as a complex and multidimensional component of language that encompasses knowledge of word form, meaning, and use, as well as the ability to apply words appropriately in communication. Vocabulary mastery is therefore essential for EFL learners because it underpins comprehension, expression, and overall language proficiency.

2. The Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays a crucial role in second language learning because it directly affects learners' ability to communicate effectively. (Alqahtani, 2015) explained that vocabulary knowledge is a fundamental part of language proficiency, as it enables learners to express ideas and understand spoken and written language. Learners who possess a limited vocabulary often face difficulties in conveying meaning, even when they understand grammatical rules.

In addition, vocabulary knowledge significantly influences reading comprehension, especially for learners

of English as a foreign or additional language. (Brooks, 2023) stated that students with a broader vocabulary are better able to comprehend texts, identify main ideas, and interpret meanings accurately. Conversely, insufficient vocabulary knowledge can hinder comprehension and limit learners' academic performance.

Furthermore, vocabulary mastery supports the development of all language skills and increases learners' confidence in using the language. (Wilkins, 1972) famously stated that while grammar allows limited communication, vocabulary is essential for conveying meaning. This indicates that vocabulary is the core element of communication. Therefore, continuous vocabulary development is essential for second language learners to improve language acquisition and achieve effective communication.

3. Types of Vocabulary

In vocabulary learning, researchers commonly distinguish between productive vocabulary and receptive vocabulary based on how learners use and understand words (Zheng, 2024). These two categories reflect different aspects of vocabulary knowledge in language acquisition.

1. Productive Vocabulary

Productive vocabulary refers to the set of words that learners can actively use in speaking and writing. This means learners are not only able to recognize the meaning of words, but also able to *pronounce, spell, and use them correctly* in real communication. Productive vocabulary thus requires deeper mastery because it involves *generating language output* accurately and appropriately in context (Zheng, 2024).

2. Receptive Vocabulary

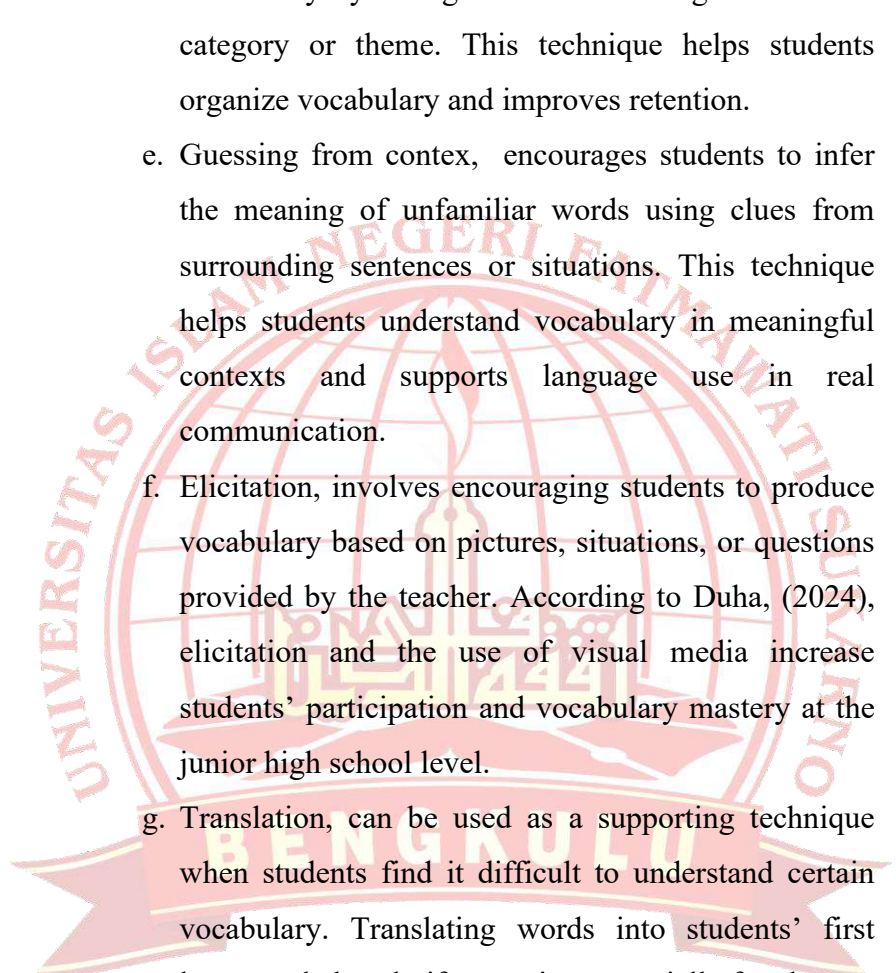
Receptive vocabulary includes words that learners can recognize and understand when encountered in listening or reading activities, but cannot necessarily produce in their own speech or writing. Learners may comprehend the meaning and form of these words through exposure, yet lack the confidence or practice to use them actively. Typically, receptive vocabulary is larger than productive vocabulary because comprehension precedes production in language learning (Zheng, 2024).

4. Techniques of Teaching Vocabulary

Generally, there are many techniques that can be applied in teaching vocabulary. English teachers should consider effective ways to help students understand, remember, and use new vocabulary. Vocabulary needs to

be learned, practiced, and reinforced continuously so that students do not easily forget it. According to Elsheikh & Elmahdi, (2020), several techniques can be used in teaching vocabulary, as follows:

- a. Using Objects, Using real objects from everyday life helps students understand the meaning of vocabulary directly. This technique allows students to associate words with concrete objects, making learning more meaningful (Elsheikh & Elmahdi, 2020).
- b. Drawing Objects or Using Pictures, Drawing objects on the board or using picture cards and illustrations can help students recognize and remember vocabulary. Visual media support students' memory and are suitable for junior high school students (Elsheikh & Elmahdi, 2020) Using Mimics, Expressions, and Gestures, Facial expressions and body movements can be used to explain the meaning of words without verbal explanation. This technique is effective for conveying abstract vocabulary and increasing students' engagement.
- c. Comparison (Contrast) is a technique that explains the meaning of a word by contrasting it with its opposite. For example, comparing the words "*long*" and "*short*" helps students understand the difference clearly.

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- d. Enumeration (Listing) is a technique of teaching vocabulary by listing words that belong to the same category or theme. This technique helps students organize vocabulary and improves retention.
- e. Guessing from context, encourages students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words using clues from surrounding sentences or situations. This technique helps students understand vocabulary in meaningful contexts and supports language use in real communication.
- f. Elicitation, involves encouraging students to produce vocabulary based on pictures, situations, or questions provided by the teacher. According to Duha, (2024), elicitation and the use of visual media increase students' participation and vocabulary mastery at the junior high school level.
- g. Translation, can be used as a supporting technique when students find it difficult to understand certain vocabulary. Translating words into students' first language helps clarify meaning, especially for abstract or unfamiliar words (Elsheikh & Elmahdi, 2020).
- h. Teaching Vocabulary through Applications, In technology-based learning, vocabulary teaching techniques can be integrated into learning applications. Applications often use pictures, word lists, contextual

exercises, and interactive activities. (Duha, 2024)states that interactive strategies supported by media and technology can enhance students' engagement and vocabulary mastery. Therefore, the use of applications such as Educaplay can support vocabulary learning by making it more interesting and effective.

5. Purpose of Vocabulary

In general, vocabulary plays an important role in English language learning. Vocabulary helps students understand meaning, express ideas, and communicate effectively. Without sufficient vocabulary, students may find difficulties in learning English and using the language in daily communication. Therefore, vocabulary mastery is needed to support students in understanding and using English properly.

According to Miller (1999), knowing a word means not only knowing its meaning, but also understanding how to use it in context. In addition, Alqahtani (2015) states that vocabulary is an essential part of foreign language learning because learners need vocabulary to communicate successfully. Based on these statements, the purposes of vocabulary learning are as follows:

- a. To help students understand the meaning of English words.

- b. To enable students to use words appropriately in context.
- c. To support the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.
- d. To improve students' communicative competence in English.
- e. To improve students' vocabulary mastery through Educaplay activities. Overall, vocabulary functions as a means of understanding meaning, expressing ideas, supporting communication, and improving students' vocabulary mastery in learning English.

B. Definition of Educaplay

1. Definition of Educaplay

Educaplay is a web-based educational platform designed to create and use interactive learning activities that can be accessed through internet-connected devices such as computers, tablets, and smartphones. Through this platform, teachers and learners are able to engage in various game-based activities, including quizzes, matching exercises, word searches, crosswords, and vocabulary games. In using Educaplay, students are required to complete tasks by selecting correct answers, matching words with meanings, or identifying vocabulary based on the given instructions. When the answers provided are

correct, the system automatically gives immediate feedback, while incorrect answers encourage learners to try again and improve their understanding (Padmadewi et al., 2025).

Founded in 2010, Educaplay was developed by ADR Formación, a Spanish organization focused on digital learning resources and educational innovation. Educaplay was created to support teachers in designing interactive and multimedia-based learning materials without requiring advanced technical skills. The platform has been widely used by educators around the world as a learning medium, particularly in language learning contexts, because it allows teachers to integrate game elements into instructional activities. According to previous studies, Educaplay helps increase students' motivation, engagement, and active participation in the learning process, especially in vocabulary learning, as learners can practice vocabulary repeatedly in an enjoyable and meaningful way (Rincón Zambrano, 2025).

2. Advantages of Educaplay

Educaplay is an educational platform that can be accessed freely and easily through internet-connected devices, making it practical for both teachers and students to use. The platform is simple to operate and

does not require advanced technological skills, so users can quickly understand how to use it. Educaplay provides various types of activities such as quizzes, matching exercises, word searches, and crosswords, which are already familiar to many learners. These activities help students feel comfortable during the learning process and reduce anxiety when learning new vocabulary. In addition, Educaplay's gamification features increase the attractiveness of learning activities and make lessons more engaging, which has been shown to enhance learning motivation and participation among students in various learning contexts.

Educaplay also offers learning activities with different levels of difficulty that can be adjusted according to students' abilities. This allows students to learn gradually, starting from simpler tasks and moving to more challenging ones without feeling overwhelmed. In addition, Educaplay can be used anytime and anywhere, giving students flexibility to practice vocabulary and other learning materials both inside and outside the classroom, which helps maximize learning time and engagement. Research has shown that Educaplay as interactive media can significantly increase students' engagement,

enthusiasm, and interest in learning activities, contributing to improved learning outcomes(Wafiqni & Adelia, 2025).

Another advantage of Educaplay is its attractive and interactive design, which makes the learning process more enjoyable. The use of game-based features encourages active participation, supports repeated practice, and provides immediate feedback, helping students identify errors and correct them in real time. Educaplay's role as a gamified learning medium has been linked to increased student motivation and greater participation in learning tasks, making the learning experience more effective compared to conventional methods that rely solely on teacher-centered instruction(Safitri & Rusdini, 2026).

Overall, Educaplay has several advantages in supporting vocabulary mastery and other learning objectives. The platform promotes active learning, flexibility, motivation, and repeated practice through interactive and gamified activities, which can lead to better academic engagement and improved learning results across subjects(Agdiyah & Mustopa, 2024).

3. Disvantages of Educaplay

Apart from its advantages, Educaplay also has several drawbacks in its use as a learning platform.

One of the main limitations of Educaplay is its dependence on internet access and digital devices. Since Educaplay is a web-based platform, students must have a stable internet connection to access learning activities. In learning environments where internet access is limited or unstable, this condition may interrupt the learning process and reduce students' participation. In addition, not all students have equal access to smartphones, tablets, or computers, which may create inequality among learners and limit the effectiveness of Educaplay as an instructional tool (Padmadewi et al., 2025).

Another disadvantage of Educaplay is related to the excessive use of game-based activities. If the platform is used too frequently without proper guidance, students may focus more on completing the games rather than understanding the learning content, including vocabulary meaning and usage. The repetitive nature of some activities may also feel less challenging for more advanced students and reduce their interest in learning. Furthermore, game-based learning that is not well managed can cause frustration and reduce students' focus on learning objectives, which may negatively affect the learning experience. Therefore, teachers need to carefully control and

integrate Educaplay activities with other instructional methods to ensure that learning goals are achieved effectively (Rincón Zambrano, 2025)

4. Procedures of Using Educaplay

Here is how to access and use Educaplay through internet-connected devices:

- a. Step one : Open a web browser on a computer, tablet, or smartphone and access the Educaplay website at www.educaplay.com

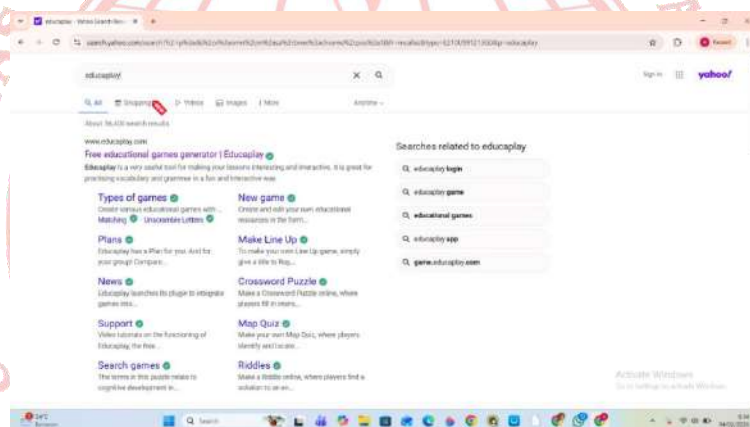


Figure 1. Educaplay Account Login

- b. Step two : Log in to the Educaplay platform using a registered account.

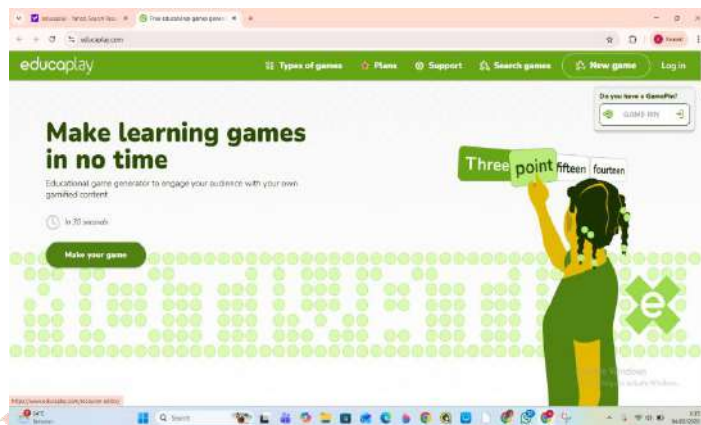
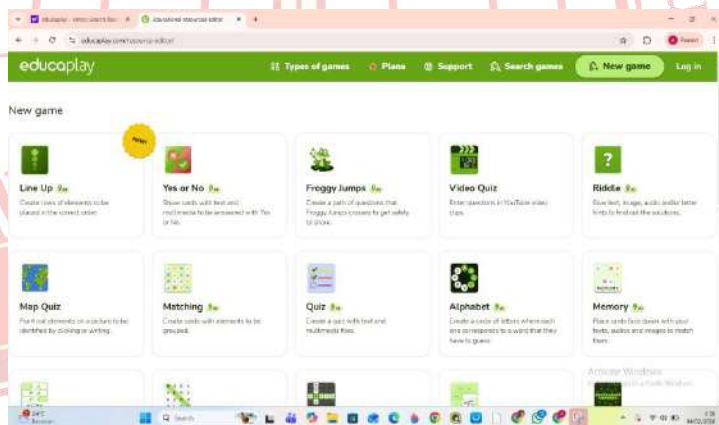


Figure 2. Educaplay Account Login

- c. Step three : Select the vocabulary activity provided by the teacher from the available list or by using an activity link.



d.

Figure 3. Educaplay Account Login

- e. Step four :Read the instructions displayed on the screen carefully before starting the activity.

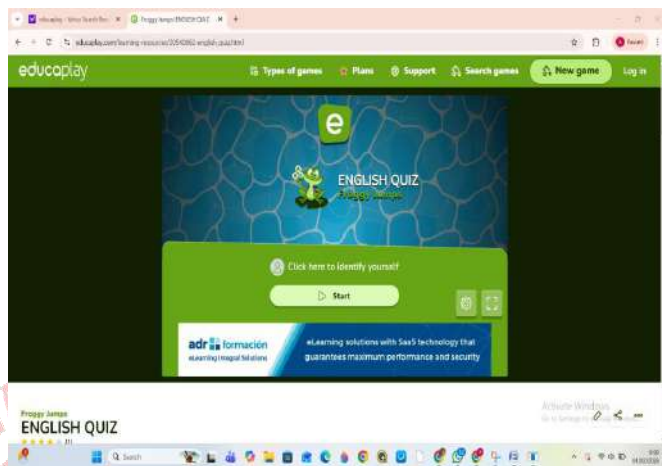


Figure 4. Educaplay Account Login

- f. Step five: Start the activity by responding to the questions or completing tasks, such as selecting correct answers or identifying vocabulary items.



Figure 5. Educaplay Activity

- g. Step six : Receive immediate feedback from the system after each response.

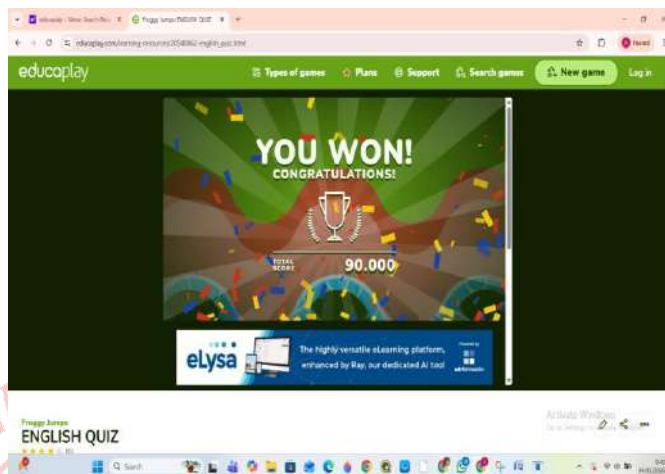


Figure 6 :Educaplay Activity

- h. Step seven : Continue the activity until all questions or tasks are completed.
- i. Step eight : View the final score or result displayed at the end of the activity. These steps explain how Educaplay is used as an interactive learning medium to support students' vocabulary mastery.

6. The Role of Educaplay to Vocabulary

Educaplay is a digital game-based learning platform that integrates interactive tasks and gamification features to support learning activities, including vocabulary acquisition. The incorporation of game elements in learning media is widely recognized for its potential to increase students' engagement, motivation, and attention during the learning process. Compared to conventional instructional approaches, digital game-based platforms provide varied learning

experiences that can accommodate different learning preferences and encourage repeated exposure to learning materials. Repeated interaction with vocabulary items through structured digital activities contributes to better recognition, recall, and understanding of word meanings, which are essential components of vocabulary mastery (Rahman & Muallim, 2025).

In the context of vocabulary learning, Educaplay facilitates meaningful practice by presenting learning tasks in an interactive format that encourages students to actively process language input. The design of tasks that require learners to recognize, recall, and apply vocabulary supports deeper cognitive processing rather than surface-level memorization. This interactive exposure can reduce cognitive load associated with rote learning and promote more sustainable learning outcomes. Furthermore, the availability of immediate feedback in digital platforms supports formative learning processes by enabling learners to identify errors and adjust their understanding in a timely manner (Fadilah et al., 2025).

However, the effectiveness of Educaplay in supporting vocabulary learning does not solely depend

on the technological features of the platform. Pedagogical implementation plays a central role in determining learning outcomes. The learning environment created through Educaplay requires instructional planning, alignment with learning objectives, and continuous monitoring to ensure that digital activities meaningfully support vocabulary development. Without appropriate instructional guidance, game-based activities may shift the focus from learning objectives to mere gameplay. Therefore, the integration of Educaplay into classroom practice should be guided by clear pedagogical purposes and structured learning design (Rahman & Muallim, 2025).

The successful use of Educaplay in vocabulary learning is also shaped by the interaction between teachers and students in the learning process. Teachers are responsible for designing learning activities, guiding students' engagement with the platform, and providing feedback to support vocabulary development. At the same time, students are expected to take an active role in participating in learning tasks, practicing vocabulary consistently, and reflecting on their learning progress. The complementary roles of teachers and students contribute to a more structured, meaningful, and effective learning process in which

digital game-based media functions as a pedagogical tool rather than merely an entertainment medium.

a. Teacher's Role in Using Educaplay

In implementing Educaplay, teachers function as facilitators and instructional designers who guide students in achieving vocabulary learning objectives through digital activities. Teachers are responsible for selecting appropriate vocabulary content, designing tasks that align with curricular goals, and integrating Educaplay activities into lesson plans in a coherent manner. Through structured instructional planning, teachers ensure that students' engagement with Educaplay remains focused on vocabulary mastery rather than on gameplay alone (Rahman & Muallim, 2025).

Moreover, teachers provide guidance and scaffolding to support students' understanding of task instructions and learning objectives. Teachers also monitor students' progress and provide formative feedback to help learners recognize errors, clarify word meanings, and improve their vocabulary usage. Continuous feedback and monitoring enable teachers to adjust instructional strategies according to students' learning needs. Through this facilitative role, teachers ensure that

the use of Educaplay contributes to meaningful learning experiences and supports students' vocabulary development in a systematic and goal-oriented manner (Fadilah et al., 2025).

b. Students' Role in Using Educaplay

Students play an active role as learners who engage directly with vocabulary learning tasks provided through Educaplay. They are expected to participate actively in completing digital activities, recognizing new vocabulary items, and recalling word meanings through repeated practice. Active engagement in interactive tasks supports deeper processing of vocabulary and enables learners to move beyond mechanical memorization toward meaningful understanding (Rahman & Muallim, 2025).

In addition, students are expected to demonstrate self-regulated learning behaviors when using Educaplay. This includes monitoring their own learning progress, identifying difficulties, and making efforts to improve their vocabulary mastery through continuous practice. The interactive features and immediate feedback provided by Educaplay can enhance students' motivation and persistence in learning activities. Through

consistent engagement with vocabulary tasks, students not only develop their lexical knowledge but also strengthen cognitive skills such as problem-solving and concentration, which contribute to more effective vocabulary learning and long-term retention (Fadilah et al., 2025).

7. Previous Study

Several previous studies have demonstrated that game-based learning and digital interactive environments contribute positively to students' vocabulary acquisition and retention in EFL contexts. These studies emphasize that vocabulary learning becomes more effective when learners are actively engaged in meaningful tasks, repetition, and contextual exposure through games.

The first study was conducted by Vu, Phan, Nguyen, and Nguyen (2021) entitled *Using Word Games to Improve Vocabulary Retention in Middle School EFL Classes*. This mixed-method study involved two seventh-grade classes over eight weeks, consisting of an experimental group that learned vocabulary through word games and a control group that used conventional teaching methods. The data were collected through pre-tests, post-tests, questionnaires, and interviews. The findings showed

that the experimental group achieved significantly higher vocabulary retention compared to the control group. Moreover, students perceived word games as motivating and enjoyable, which increased their engagement and exposure to target vocabulary(Vu et al., 2021). This study indicates that word games provide repeated practice and contextual learning opportunities that support long-term vocabulary retention.

The second study by Umbola, Maru, and Hampp (2022) examined the effectiveness of using the Wordscapes application to improve students' vocabulary mastery at the senior high school level. This quantitative study employed a pre-test and post-test design to measure students' vocabulary achievement before and after the implementation of the Wordscapes game. The results revealed a significant improvement in students' post-test scores, indicating that the use of digital word game applications can enhance vocabulary mastery. The study also reported that students showed higher motivation and enthusiasm during the learning process, as the game-based approach created a more engaging learning atmosphere(Umbola et al., 2022). These findings support the use of mobile game

applications as effective learning media for vocabulary development.

The third study was conducted by Sahinler, Chen, and Williams (2023), who investigated the effect of gamifying vocabulary acquisition and retention in a virtual reality (VR) environment. This quantitative research explored how immersive digital games influence learners' vocabulary learning outcomes. The results of the pre-test and post-test indicated that students experienced significant improvements in both vocabulary acquisition and retention after participating in VR-based game activities. The study concluded that immersive and interactive learning environments provide meaningful contextual exposure to vocabulary and strengthen memory retention through repeated interaction with target words (Sahinler et al., n.d.). This finding highlights that advanced digital game environments can enhance vocabulary learning by combining engagement, context, and experiential learning.

The fourth study by Nordin, Kamaludin, Sharif, Chumari, and Zabidin (2024) conducted a literature review on the effectiveness of vocabulary games in improving learners' vocabulary acquisition. The review synthesized findings from multiple empirical

studies and concluded that vocabulary games significantly enhance learners' vocabulary mastery, motivation, and engagement. The authors emphasized that game-based learning reduces learners' anxiety, increases participation, and supports meaningful learning experiences. This review further suggests that vocabulary games should be integrated strategically into classroom instruction to maximize learning outcomes (Nordin et al., 2024).

Overall, these previous studies consistently indicate that game-based learning approaches—ranging from word games and mobile applications to immersive virtual reality environments—have a positive impact on vocabulary acquisition and retention. The similarities among these studies lie in their focus on interactive learning and learner engagement as key factors in improving vocabulary mastery. However, the differences are found in the types of games used, research designs, and educational levels of participants. These variations provide a strong foundation for further investigating the effectiveness of specific digital word games in improving students' vocabulary mastery in different educational contexts.

8. Theoretical Framework

The following was a conceptual framework arranged in simpler language in accordance with the research title “The Effect of Using Educaplay Web-Based Platform in Improving Students’ Vocabulary Mastery of Seventh Grade Students.” The study has two main variables:

1. **Variable X (Independent Variable)** was the use of the Educaplay web-based platform as a learning tool for students. The main focus of this research was to observe how the use of this web-based platform affects students’ vocabulary mastery. Educaplay was utilized in the classroom as an online learning medium that makes vocabulary learning more engaging and interactive. Through various web-based activities such as matching, word search, crossword puzzles, and quizzes, students were given opportunities to practice vocabulary repeatedly and receive immediate feedback. The use of Educaplay was expected to increase students’ motivation and engagement in learning vocabulary, so that the learning process became more meaningful and enjoyable.
2. **Variable Y (Dependent Variable)** was the improvement of students’ vocabulary mastery. This improvement was the outcome measured after students used the Educaplay web-based platform. The purpose of this study was to determine how far Educaplay could help students enhance

their vocabulary mastery and whether there was a positive change in their learning outcomes after using the web-based platform. The improvement of vocabulary mastery in this study included students' ability to recognize new words (receptive vocabulary), use words correctly (productive vocabulary), and retain vocabulary over time. The interactive features of Educaplay were expected to support students' understanding and retention of vocabulary through repeated exposure and active involvement in learning activities.

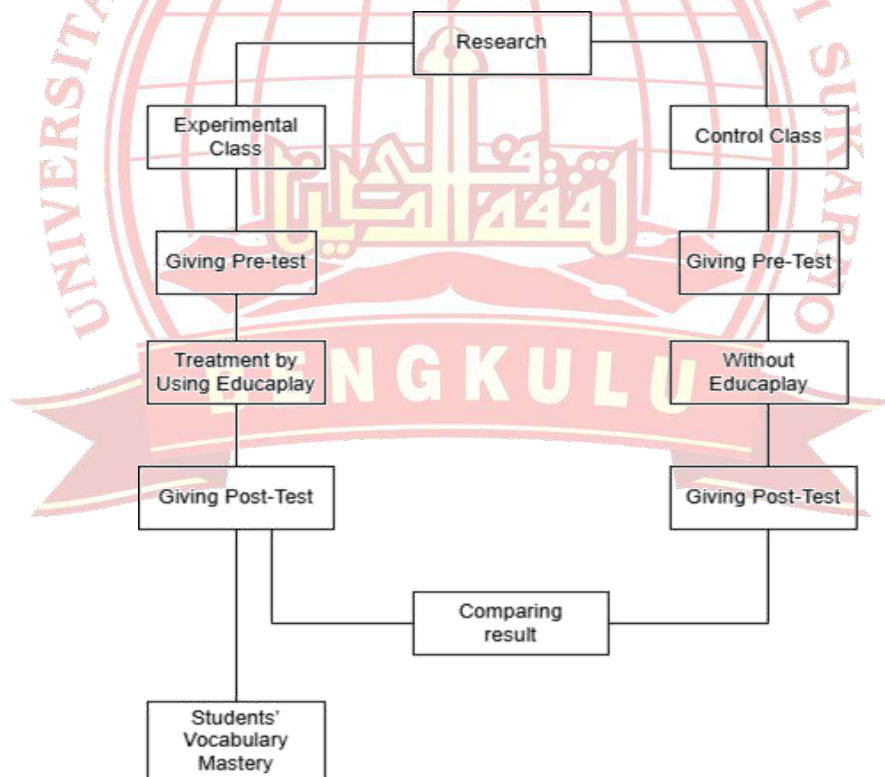


Figure 7. Conceptual Framework

9. Hypothesis

Based on the identified research problem, the researcher formulates the following hypotheses:

1. Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant effect of using the Educaplay web-based platform on improving the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at SMPN 25 Bengkulu City.
2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): There is a significant effect of using the Educaplay web-based platform on improving the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at SMPN 25 Bengkulu City.

