

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the foundation of the study. It consists of the background of the study, problems of the study, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and definition of key terms. These sections explain the reasons for conducting the research, the problems encountered in the classroom, the purposes to be achieved, and the important concepts related to the study entitled *Enhancing Vocabulary Retention through Genre-Based Approach and Project-Based Learning in Creating an Illustrated English Dictionary at the Ninth F-Grade of MTsN 6 Kediri*.

A. Background of the Study

Vocabulary plays an essential role in second language acquisition and overall language proficiency. Without sufficient vocabulary, learners cannot effectively comprehend texts, express ideas, or participate in conversations, regardless of their grammatical knowledge (Nation, 2020). Vocabulary is the foundation for communication, and its acquisition and retention are central to language learning success. Vocabulary retention refers to a person's ability to remember and use words effectively. Vocabulary retention is still a major problem for many EFL students, especially in Indonesian junior high schools like MTsN 6 Kediri, vocabulary retention remains a significant challenge. Students often forget newly learned words within days or weeks, limiting their ability to communicate and comprehend texts effectively.

Based on preliminary observations in Ninth F-Grade of MTsN 6 Kediri and discussions with the English teacher, it was found that many students have difficulty in remembering and using English vocabulary in the learning context. This can be seen from the low participation of students when asked to write or make simple sentences using previously learned vocabulary.

Traditional vocabulary instruction in Indonesian schools often relies heavily on rote memorization, where students are provided with lists of isolated words and are expected to memorize them for recall-based assessments. Such practices do not facilitate deep processing, contextual understanding, or meaningful use of vocabulary, leading to short-term retention and limited transfer to communicative competence (Nuraini, Rohmadi, & Sumarlam, 2022). Additionally, vocabulary teaching is frequently separated from productive language skills such as writing and speaking, further hindering students' ability to actively use newly learned vocabulary in authentic communication.

In line with the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning, authentic tasks, and competency development, the integration of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) offers a more effective alternative. GBA provides structured scaffolding that helps students understand how language functions within specific text types, supporting deeper comprehension of vocabulary in context (Khasanah et al., 2023). Meanwhile, PjBL engages learners in meaningful, real-world projects that require the application of their linguistic knowledge, thereby reinforcing long-term vocabulary retention (Nurhidayah et al., 2021). When combined for example, through the project of creating an Illustrated English Dictionary these approaches

allow students to both learn vocabulary contextually and apply it in an authentic product, making the learning process more meaningful, interactive, and aligned with curriculum goals.

GBA encourages students to analyze the structure, purpose, and linguistic features of different types of texts, supporting the integration of vocabulary learning within the broader context of language use (Hyland, 2019). By learning vocabulary embedded in genres such as descriptive texts, procedures or narratives texts, students are more likely to easily understand how words function in real life communication.

Although GBA provides a strong foundation for contextualized language learning, its effectiveness can be further enhanced through the integration of Project-Based Learning (PjBL). PjBL engages students in complex and meaningful tasks and encourages them to produce real-world projects, promoting collaboration, critical thinking, and learner autonomy (Nurhidayah et al., 2021). Through projects, students will be motivated to use vocabulary in their daily lives actively and creatively, which can improve retention and deepens learning.

Recent research further indicates that combining more than one instructional approach often produces stronger learning outcomes than applying a single method in isolation. Gunawan et al. (2025) demonstrate that integrating multiple pedagogical models creates a more dynamic and effective learning environment. The combination of structured guidance and student-centered exploration allows learners to benefit from both systematic instruction and meaningful application. This integration supports deeper cognitive engagement, which is essential for strengthening memory consolidation and long-term retention.

The complementary nature of GBA and PjBL makes their integration pedagogically promising. GBA provides explicit linguistic scaffolding and genre awareness (Hyland, 2019), while PjBL promotes autonomy, collaboration, and authentic production (Nurhidayah et al., 2021). When combined, students not only understand language structures but also apply them creatively in project outcomes. This dual support system is particularly relevant for vocabulary retention, which requires repeated exposure, contextual usage, and meaningful production (Nation, 2020).

One very interesting and effective project for vocabulary development is the creation of an illustrated English dictionary. This activity requires students to find or create visual representations of images, select vocabulary words, define them and apply them in visual context of image to complete this task. Visual representations help students encode and retrieve information more effectively, leading to stronger retention (Susanti et al., 2022). Moreover, with the creation of an Illustrated English Dictionary, allowing students to customize their learning, this exercise increases motivation and gives them a sense of ownership over their vocabulary.

Combining GBA and PjBL in the creation of an Illustrated English Dictionary can provide a rich context for students to learn and remember vocabulary. Through this project, students not only learn new words but also understand their use in different genres of text, while engaging in a creative process that reinforces their learning.

Several studies support the value of illustrated dictionaries and visual aids in vocabulary learning. Susanti et al. (2022) found that students who created their

own illustrated dictionaries showed higher vocabulary acquisition compared to students who used standard word lists. Similarly, Oxford University Press (2021) highlighted the power of visual elements in helping students understand and retain meaning. However, despite these positive findings, the integration of GBA and PjBL in the context of illustrated dictionary creation has not been widely explored, especially in the MTs (Islamic junior high school) in Indonesia.

Although many studies have examined the impact of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) on the development of students' writing skills (Khasanah, Murtadlo, & Sari, 2023) and identified the benefits of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in enhancing student engagement and conceptual understanding, particularly in science education (Nurhidayah, Wibowo, & Astra, 2021), research examining the combined use of these two approaches to improve vocabulary retention remains scarce. Furthermore, learning projects involving the creation of picture dictionaries or illustrations are rarely systematically integrated into GBA and PjBL frameworks in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Existing studies focus primarily on writing or speaking outcomes; therefore, there is also a need for instruction focused on vocabulary retention as a primary, measurable learning objective.

Another aspect that has not yet been fully explored is the range of practical challenges students face during project-based activities. Although GBA and PjBL have a strong theoretical foundation, implementation in the classroom may be hindered by factors such as time constraints, varying levels of student motivation, and readiness to manage project-based learning.

In this context, this study will examine whether the integration of GBA and PjBL can effectively enhance vocabulary retention in creating an Illustrated English Dictionary at the ninth F-grade of MTsN 6 Kediri. In addition to measuring the extent of the improvement in students' vocabulary retention, this study will also document the challenges that arise during the learning process and provide a clearer description of how these approaches are applied in practice and what factors influence their effectiveness.

B. Problems of the Study

Based on the preliminary observations, students' difficulties in remembering and using vocabulary require a more engaging and supportive learning approach. Integrating the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in creating an Illustrated English Dictionary is expected to address these issues. Therefore, the research problems are formulated as follows:

1. How can the integration of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in creating an Illustrated English Dictionary improve students' vocabulary retention at the ninth F-grade of MTsN 6 Kediri?
2. What challenges are faced by students during the implementation of GBA and PjBL in this learning process, and how can these challenges be addressed?

C. Objective of the Study

To address the problems identified and to guide the direction of this research, the objectives of the study are formulated as follows:

1. To examine whether the integration of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in creating an Illustrated English Dictionary can improve students' vocabulary retention at the ninth F-grade of MTsN 6 Kediri.

2. To identify the challenges faced by students during the implementation of GBA and PjBL and to propose possible solutions to address these challenges.

D. Significance of the Study

This research is expected to provide direct benefits for ninth-F students of MTsN 6 Kediri in improving their ability to remember and use English vocabulary. Through the Illustrated English Dictionary project-specifically developed from *Procedure Text* materials (such as “how to make food”) students will be actively engaged in a creative, contextual, and meaningful learning process. By selecting or creating illustrations related to step-by-step procedures in making food, students not only learn vocabulary in its functional context but also strengthen their memory through visual association and hands-on project work. This activity supports deeper vocabulary retention while encouraging collaborative learning, critical thinking, and increased confidence in using English.

For teachers, this research provides an innovative and enjoyable strategy for teaching vocabulary and procedure texts. The integration of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) enables teachers to design systematic yet flexible instruction suited to students’ needs. This combined approach allows teachers to guide students through genre stages while facilitating engaging project-based tasks that make vocabulary learning more meaningful. More broadly, the results of this study can serve as a reference for other educators in developing creative learning media, improving vocabulary acquisition, and enhancing students’ literacy skills through genre-based and project-oriented instruction.

E. Definition of Key Terms

The following are some definitions of important terms that are used in this study.

1. Vocabulary Retention

Vocabulary retention refers to the ability of learners to remember and recall vocabulary items over time. Effective vocabulary retention is crucial for language acquisition, as it enables learners to use new words in appropriate contexts. Strategies to enhance vocabulary retention include spaced repetition, mnemonic devices, and contextual learning (Nation, 2020).

2. GBA

The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) is a teaching methodology that focuses on the explicit teaching of different text types or genres, emphasizing their structures and linguistic features. This approach aims to help students understand and produce texts that are socially and culturally appropriate by making the conventions of different genres explicit (Hyland, 2019).

3. PjBL

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is an instructional approach where students actively explore real-world problems and challenges by engaging in extended projects. This method promotes deep learning by encouraging students to investigate and respond to complex questions, problems, or challenges, fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills (Nurhidayah et al., 2021).

4. Illustrated English Dictionary

An Illustrated English Dictionary is a learning product created through the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach, in which students design a vocabulary dictionary that includes word definitions accompanied by relevant visual representations. The process of producing this dictionary requires students to select vocabulary, understand its meaning and usage, and illustrate each word either by drawing or selecting appropriate images. Through this project, students engage in hands-on, collaborative, and meaningful tasks that reflect the core principles of PjBL-such as creativity, autonomy, problem-solving, and product-oriented learning. The visual elements support better understanding and retention of vocabulary, making the illustrated dictionary an effective project-based tool for enhancing students' language learning (Oxford University Press, 2021).