

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and related studies that support this research. It discusses key concepts of vocabulary retention, Genre-Based Approach (GBA), Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and the use of visual media in vocabulary learning. In addition, previous studies are reviewed to identify relevant findings and position the present study within existing research.

A. Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical foundations of this study, covering four key areas: (1) vocabulary and vocabulary retention, (2) Genre-Based Approach (GBA), (3) Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and (4) visual media and illustrated dictionaries in vocabulary learning. These theories collectively underpin the integration of GBA and PjBL to enhance students' vocabulary retention.

1. Vocabulary Retention and its Importance in English Learning

Understanding vocabulary is fundamental to successful English language learning. This section provides a theoretical overview of vocabulary, beginning with its definition, kinds, and importance in English Learning.

a. Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the essential components that must be mastered by learners in acquiring a foreign language. It refers to a set of words along with their meanings, which are used to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings in communication. Vocabulary is widely recognized as a fundamental aspect of language learning and proficiency. According to Schmitt (2019), vocabulary knowledge is a complex construct that includes not only the ability to recognize and

produce words but also an understanding of their meanings, usage, and relationships within a language system.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), vocabulary can be defined as the collection of words that learners need to acquire in order to communicate effectively, comprehend texts, and succeed in academic settings (Min, 2013, as cited in Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024). This definition emphasizes that vocabulary learning is not merely about memorizing word lists, but also about understanding how words function in meaningful contexts. Furthermore, vocabulary knowledge involves both receptive and productive dimensions, as well as knowledge of word forms, meanings, collocations, and pragmatic use (Schmitt, 2019).

b. Kinds of Vocabulary

Vocabulary can be classified into several categories based on its function and usage. One common classification distinguishes between receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary refers to the words that learners can recognize and understand when listening or reading, while productive vocabulary refers to the words that learners can actively use in speaking or writing (Schmitt, 2019).

Another classification differentiates between oral and written vocabulary. Oral vocabulary includes words that are used and recognized in spoken communication, whereas written vocabulary refers to words encountered in reading and used in writing. Additionally, vocabulary can be categorized into general vocabulary, which is used in everyday communication, and specialized vocabulary, which is used in specific fields or contexts. These classifications reflect the different

cognitive processes involved in acquiring and using vocabulary and provide important implications for instructional strategies in EFL classrooms (Schmitt, 2019).

c. The Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays a crucial role in language learning because it directly influences learners' ability to communicate, comprehend texts, and achieve academic success. Mastery of vocabulary is essential for developing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Min, 2013, as cited in Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024). Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners cannot effectively express ideas or understand messages, regardless of their knowledge of grammar or pronunciation.

Vocabulary knowledge also enhances learners' ability to understand various types of texts, convey ideas clearly, and participate actively in communicative situations. In addition, vocabulary acquisition is closely related to academic performance, as learners with a strong vocabulary base are better able to comprehend academic materials and perform well in assessments (Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024). Therefore, vocabulary is considered a foundational element that supports overall language proficiency (Schmitt, 2019).

d. The Importance of Vocabulary Retention

Vocabulary retention refers to the ability to store and recall newly learned words over time. It is a critical aspect of language learning, as learners need to retain vocabulary in long-term memory in order to use it effectively in communication. Many EFL learners experience difficulties in retaining vocabulary due to cognitive

limitations, particularly when the learning process imposes a high cognitive load (Rosyada-AS & Apoko, 2023, as cited in Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024).

According to Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), the human brain has a limited capacity for processing information. When cognitive load exceeds this capacity, it can hinder the process of encoding information into long-term memory (Sweller, 1988, as cited in Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024). Effective vocabulary retention requires careful management of cognitive load to ensure that learners can process, store, and retrieve new words efficiently.

Furthermore, research in cognitive psychology indicates that working memory plays a crucial role in processing new vocabulary, while long-term memory is responsible for storing it. When cognitive load is properly managed, neural connections related to vocabulary learning are strengthened, leading to better retention and recall (Baddeley, 1992; Ofen et al., 2016, as cited in Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024). Therefore, vocabulary retention is essential not only for immediate language use but also for long-term language development and academic achievement.

2. Genre-Based Approach (GBA)

The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) is a pedagogical framework that emphasizes the explicit teaching of language structures, linguistic features, and communicative purposes of different text types. It is grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which views language as a resource for meaning-making within specific social and cultural contexts (Hyland, 2019). In this perspective, language learning is not only about mastering grammatical forms but

also about understanding how language is used appropriately in various communicative situations.

GBA provides a structured and systematic learning process through several stages, namely Building Knowledge of the Field (BkoF), Modeling of the Text (MoT), Joint Construction of the Text (JcoT), and Independent Construction of the Text (IcoT) (Hyland, 2019). These stages are designed to scaffold students' learning gradually, starting from understanding the context and content, analyzing text models, collaboratively constructing texts, and finally producing texts independently. Through this process, learners are guided to recognize how vocabulary, grammar, and text organization work together to create meaning.

Furthermore, GBA supports contextualized vocabulary learning, as vocabulary is introduced and practiced within meaningful texts rather than in isolation. This approach helps learners develop both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge, enabling them to understand and use words effectively in real communication. By integrating language form, meaning, and function, GBA facilitates deeper understanding and retention of vocabulary within specific genres.

3. Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is an instructional approach that emphasizes student-centered learning through the completion of meaningful and authentic projects. In this approach, learning occurs as students actively engage in exploring problems, answering questions, and producing tangible outcomes that reflect their understanding. PjBL encourages learners to take responsibility for their learning process, work collaboratively, and apply knowledge in real-world contexts (Nurhidayah, Wibowo, & Astra, 2021).

According to Nurhidayah et al. (2021), the implementation of PjBL generally consists of six stages: (1) starting with an essential question, (2) designing the project plan, (3) creating a schedule, (4) monitoring students' progress, (5) assessing the project outcomes, and (6) evaluating the learning experience. Through these stages, students actively construct knowledge, collaborate with peers, and develop responsibility for their learning.

In addition, PjBL promotes active learning by engaging students in collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving (Nurhidayah et al., 2021; Syahril et al., 2022). It provides opportunities for learners to integrate knowledge and skills across different domains while producing authentic products. Through this process, students are not only learning content but also developing important competencies such as autonomy, responsibility, and communication skills (Cahyani, 2021; Veselov et al., 2019).

When applied in language learning, PjBL supports meaningful vocabulary acquisition by placing learners in situations where they must use language purposefully (Mafruudloh & Fitriati, 2020; Zhang & Ma, 2023). The creation of project-based products, such as an illustrated English dictionary, allows students to connect vocabulary with visual representation and real usage, thereby enhancing comprehension and retention (Susanti et al., 2022). This makes PjBL a relevant and effective approach for supporting contextual and long-term vocabulary learning (Nation, 2020; Nurhidayah et al., 2021).

Recent empirical studies have further confirmed the effectiveness of PjBL in enhancing student retention and vocabulary mastery. Maharani, Asrin, and Widodo (2023) investigated the effect of the Project Based Learning model on

student activeness and retention. Their findings revealed that the implementation of PjBL significantly influenced both student activeness and retention simultaneously. This study is particularly relevant to the present research because it explicitly examines “retention” as a dependent variable, which aligns with the core focus of this study on vocabulary retention.

Similarly, Susilawati, Yasir, and Misbah (2026) documented best practices of implementing Project Based Learning in English language subjects at the junior secondary level. Their study found that PjBL significantly improved students’ vocabulary mastery, with students acquiring 40-60 new words following the intervention. In addition, student engagement increased dramatically from 30% to 85%, and the class average grade rose from 72 to 87. These findings demonstrate that PjBL is not only effective for improving vocabulary outcomes but also for increasing student motivation and active participation in the learning process.

4. Visual Media and Illustrated English Dictionary in Vocabulary Retention

Visual media plays an important role in supporting vocabulary acquisition and retention. According to Mayer (2001), the integration of verbal and visual information, known as dual coding, significantly enhances learners’ memory and understanding. Visual representations help learners build mental connections between words and their meanings, making vocabulary easier to comprehend and recall. By providing contextual support, visual media also helps reduce cognitive load and facilitates more effective information processing (Sweller, 1988, as cited in Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024).

An illustrated English dictionary is a learning tool that combines textual definitions with visual representations to support vocabulary learning. This type of

dictionary enables learners to associate vocabulary items with images, thereby strengthening memory retention and improving comprehension (Oxford University Press, 2021). The use of visual elements engages multiple cognitive processes, including visual perception and verbal processing, which contributes to deeper understanding and long-term retention of vocabulary (Mayer, 2001).

Recent empirical studies have confirmed the effectiveness of picture dictionaries and graphic illustrations in vocabulary development. Kara and Kucuk (2023) found that picture dictionary-enriched instruction significantly improved EFL learners' vocabulary development, as well as their pronunciation, spelling, reading, listening, and speaking skills. Their mixed-methods study demonstrated that students in the experimental group using the Oxford Picture Dictionary showed significantly higher vocabulary gains compared to the control group.

Dziemianko (2022) provided further empirical evidence by investigating the usefulness of graphic illustrations in online dictionaries. The study found that illustrations, particularly line drawings, significantly enhanced learners' meaning comprehension and delayed retention. Importantly, Dziemianko demonstrated that the presence of illustrations in dictionaries improved long-term vocabulary memory, even when the illustrations were no longer present during recall tests. This finding supports the dual coding theory, as learners formed both visual and verbal representations of the vocabulary items. Additionally, Dziemianko's research is particularly relevant to the present study because it employed a delayed post-test design to measure vocabulary retention, which aligns with the methodological approach used in this classroom action research.

Similarly, Saeed and Muhealddin (2024) evaluated the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction using pictorial aids based on the Oxford Picture Dictionary and found a dramatic improvement in vocabulary acquisition from pre-test to post-test ($p < 0.05$). Their findings support the application of Dual Coding Theory in vocabulary instruction and confirm that visual aids are particularly beneficial for beginner-level EFL learners.

From a cognitive perspective, visual learning supports the encoding of information into long-term memory by activating both visual and verbal channels. When learners actively engage in creating or selecting images to represent vocabulary, they process the information more meaningfully, which enhances retention (Schmitt, 2019). This active engagement aligns with the principle that vocabulary is best learned through meaningful use rather than rote memorization.

Furthermore, the use of visual media is consistent with the principles of multimodal learning, where information is presented through multiple channels to strengthen memory and comprehension. Multimodal input has been shown to improve learners' ability to store and retrieve information effectively, as it creates multiple pathways for recall (Plass & Kalyuga, 2019, as cited in Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024). In this way, visual media not only supports vocabulary retention but also increases learners' motivation and engagement in the learning process.

The use of illustrated English dictionaries also facilitates contextualized vocabulary learning. Vocabulary items can be organized based on specific themes or text types, allowing learners to understand how words function in real communicative contexts. This contextualization is essential for developing both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2020). Kara and Kucuk

(2023) further noted that picture dictionaries provide contextual clues through images, which help learners infer meanings more effectively than text-only definitions, thereby reducing reliance on translation and promoting direct meaning-word association. Similarly, Dziemianko (2022) emphasized that graphic illustrations in dictionaries help learners build mental images that serve as retrieval cues, making it easier to recall vocabulary when needed.

5. The Integration of GBA and PjBL

The integration of Genre-Based Approach (GBA) and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) offers a complementary pedagogical framework that addresses both the cognitive and affective dimensions of vocabulary learning. GBA is grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which views language as a resource for making meaning within specific social and cultural contexts (Hyland, 2019). Through its systematic stages-Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF), Modeling of the Text (MOT), Joint Construction of the Text (JCOT), and Independent Construction of the Text (ICOT)-GBA provides structured scaffolding that enables learners to understand how vocabulary functions within particular text types and communicative purposes. This structured exposure ensures that vocabulary is learned contextually, allowing students to grasp not only word meanings but also their grammatical roles, collocations, and appropriate usage within specific genres.

PjBL, on the other hand, is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful, real-world experiences (Nurhidayah et al., 2021). Through project-based activities, students engage in authentic tasks that require purposeful language use, collaboration,

problem-solving, and creative expression. This active engagement facilitates deeper cognitive processing, which is essential for transferring vocabulary from short-term to long-term memory (Nation, 2020). According to Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988, as cited in Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024), meaningful and contextualized learning reduces cognitive load, enabling more efficient encoding and retrieval of information.

The integration of GBA and PjBL is theoretically justified because it combines structured input (through GBA) with meaningful output (through PjBL). GBA ensures that students are systematically exposed to vocabulary in authentic texts, while PjBL allows students to actively practice and apply vocabulary in projects that have personal relevance. This dual process of reception and production aligns with Nation's (2020) framework for vocabulary learning, which emphasizes that effective vocabulary acquisition requires repeated exposure, meaningful use, and attention to form, meaning, and function.

Furthermore, the integration of visual media, such as illustrated dictionaries, enhances this process through the application of Dual Coding Theory (Mayer, 2001). According to this theory, information presented through both verbal and visual channels creates multiple pathways for memory retrieval, strengthening comprehension and long-term retention. When students create their own illustrated dictionaries, they engage in deep cognitive processing by selecting vocabulary, understanding meanings, creating visual representations, and constructing example sentences. This active, multimodal engagement supports the consolidation of vocabulary in long-term memory (Schmitt, 2019).

The integration of GBA and PjBL also aligns with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning, authentic tasks, and competency development. By combining structured genre-based instruction with project-based activities, teachers can create a learning environment that supports both linguistic competence and the development of essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (Nurhidayah et al., 2021).

In the context of vocabulary retention, this integrated approach addresses multiple dimensions of learning: cognitive (through structured exposure and meaningful processing), social (through collaborative project work), and affective (through increased motivation and engagement). By combining genre-based scaffolding, project-based application, and visual reinforcement through illustrated dictionaries, vocabulary learning becomes more engaging, contextualized, and effective in supporting long-term retention.

Based on the theoretical explanations above, it can be understood that vocabulary retention is most effectively developed through meaningful, contextualized, and engaging learning processes. The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) provides structured scaffolding that helps students understand how vocabulary functions within specific text types and communicative purposes (Hyland, 2019). Through its systematic stages, GBA ensures that vocabulary is introduced and practiced within meaningful contexts, which supports deeper comprehension and long-term memory consolidation.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) complements GBA by facilitating active learning through the creation of meaningful and authentic products (Nurhidayah et

al., 2021). Through project-based activities, students apply vocabulary knowledge in real-world tasks, engage in collaborative problem-solving, and produce tangible outcomes that reinforce learning. This active, product-oriented process strengthens neural connections and promotes the transfer of vocabulary from short-term to long-term memory (Nation, 2020).

In addition, the use of visual media, such as illustrated dictionaries, supports memory retention by connecting verbal and visual representations of vocabulary, in line with Dual Coding Theory (Mayer, 2001). When students create their own illustrated dictionaries, they engage in deep cognitive processing by selecting vocabulary, understanding meanings, creating visual representations, and constructing example sentences. This active, multimodal engagement facilitates the consolidation of vocabulary in long-term memory (Schmitt, 2019).

Therefore, the integration of GBA and PjBL through the creation of an illustrated English dictionary is theoretically assumed to enhance students' vocabulary retention. This study focuses on vocabulary related to procedure texts, as this genre provides clear, functional, and repetitive language use that supports vocabulary acquisition. Based on this rationale, a conceptual framework is developed to illustrate the relationship between instructional approach, learning activities, and vocabulary retention outcomes.

B. Previous Studies

Previous studies provide important foundations for the present research, particularly regarding the use of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA), Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and visual media in enhancing language learning outcomes. Hyland (2019) outlines the theoretical principles of the Genre-Based Approach,

emphasizing explicit instruction of text structure, linguistic features, and social context through systematic scaffolding stages such as building knowledge, modeling, joint construction, and independent construction. Although primarily focused on writing, Hyland's framework is relevant to vocabulary learning because vocabulary is inherently embedded within genres and contextualized language use, suggesting that GBA can support vocabulary retention when integrated into project-oriented activities.

Empirical studies on Genre-Based Approach have consistently demonstrated its effectiveness in improving language learning outcomes. Wicaksono et al. (2022) found that the implementation of GBA significantly improved students' writing performance through systematic stages of modeling, joint construction, and independent construction. Similarly, Romawi et al. (2024) reported that GBA enhanced students' writing skills and creativity by providing clear scaffolding and opportunities for meaningful language production. Furthermore, Trivani et al. (2025) revealed that students taught through GBA achieved higher writing scores and demonstrated improvements in content organization, vocabulary use, language accuracy, and mechanics. Supporting these findings, Masyhudianti (2025) showed that integrating GBA with Differentiated Instruction improved students' descriptive writing achievement and increased their engagement in classroom activities. Although these studies focused mainly on writing skills, they indicate that GBA facilitates meaningful exposure to language features and vocabulary within authentic contexts, which may contribute to vocabulary retention.

In a related line of inquiry, Cahyani (2021) conducted a literature review on the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in improving students' creativity. The study concluded that PjBL promotes student-centered learning, increases creativity, and encourages active participation through meaningful projects connected to real-life contexts. These findings suggest that project-based activities can provide opportunities for learners to engage deeply with language content and vocabulary while creating authentic products. Similarly, Nurhidayah et al. (2021) reviewed the implementation of PjBL in science education and found that it enhances critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and learning outcomes. Although situated in a different discipline, the study highlights the universal strengths of PjBL as an instructional approach that fosters meaningful learning through product creation, supporting its application in language learning contexts.

The effectiveness of PjBL is further supported by Syahril et al. (2022), who investigated the impact of project-based learning on students' 4Cs skills, namely creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. Their findings revealed that students involved in project-based activities demonstrated significantly higher levels of these skills than those engaged in conventional project work. Since vocabulary learning is closely connected with communication and collaboration, these findings indicate that PjBL can create a learning environment that promotes active vocabulary use and retention. Likewise, Veselov et al. (2019) emphasized that project-based learning bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application by engaging learners in authentic tasks and collaborative problem-solving. This authentic learning environment is particularly

relevant to vocabulary instruction because students encounter and apply vocabulary in meaningful contexts rather than through isolated memorization.

Research comparing PjBL with other instructional models also provides valuable evidence. Amini et al. (2019) found that students taught through Project-Based Learning achieved significantly better learning outcomes than those taught through Problem-Based Learning. The researchers argued that the product-oriented nature of PjBL encourages students to engage more actively in the learning process and facilitates deeper understanding. Similarly, Suradika et al. (2023) reported that both PjBL and Problem-Based Learning support the development of critical and creative thinking skills, which are essential competencies for meaningful language learning and vocabulary acquisition.

The role of visual media in vocabulary enhancement is further supported by Susanti et al. (2022), who found that illustrated dictionaries significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery compared to conventional methods. Their results indicate that pairing words with visual representations facilitates memory and strengthens vocabulary retention. Similarly, Nuraini et al. (2022) investigated teachers' perspectives on strategies for improving vocabulary retention and identified meaningful context, repetition, active engagement, and visual media as essential components in effective vocabulary instruction. These conclusions reinforce the relevance of combining contextual genre instruction with hands-on project work to improve long-term vocabulary learning.

In addition, research by Khasanah et al. (2023) demonstrated that integrating GBA with PjBL in writing instruction enhanced students' engagement, comprehension of text structure, and overall writing performance. Although their

study focused on writing rather than vocabulary, the successful integration of both approaches provides strong pedagogical justification for applying GBA-PjBL integration to vocabulary retention. The structured scaffolding offered by GBA can support learners in understanding vocabulary within meaningful texts, while PjBL enables them to apply and reinforce vocabulary knowledge through collaborative project creation.

In a study closely related to the present research, Putri (2025) conducted a Classroom Action Research study to improve students' vocabulary retention on procedure text for ninth-grade students of MTs 2 Jember. Using the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model, Putri implemented Videoscribe media as the instructional intervention. The findings showed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary retention, with mastery increasing from 40% in the pre-test to 100% in the post-test after one cycle. This study demonstrates that visual media can effectively enhance vocabulary retention for procedure text materials at the MTs level.

However, several differences distinguish the present study from Putri's (2025) research. First, while Putri focused exclusively on Videoscribe as a technological tool, the present study integrates two pedagogical approaches, namely Genre-Based Approach (GBA) and Project-Based Learning (PjBL), through the creation of an Illustrated English Dictionary. Second, Putri's study emphasized the use of teacher-created media, whereas the present study engages students actively in creating their own learning product (the illustrated dictionary), which aligns with the principles of student-centered learning and project-based instruction. Third, the present study combines visual media with structured genre-based scaffolding

(BKOF, MOT, JCOT, ICOT), which Putri's study did not explicitly incorporate. Therefore, the present study contributes to the existing literature by examining the integration of GBA and PjBL in the context of illustrated dictionary creation, an area that has not been extensively explored in previous research.

Finally, Gunawan et al. (2025) examined the combined effects of PjBL and Problem-Based Learning on students' problem-solving skills and motivation. Their findings revealed significant positive impacts on learners' cognitive engagement and learning motivation, further affirming the value of project-based environments in promoting deeper learning processes. While the study did not directly address vocabulary acquisition, its findings support the use of PjBL as an effective, motivating, and cognitively rich instructional approach.

Taken together, these studies highlight a consistent pattern: GBA provides structured scaffolding for meaningful language use, PjBL fosters active and collaborative learning through authentic product creation, and visual media—particularly illustrated dictionaries—enhances vocabulary retention. However, limited research has specifically examined the integration of GBA and PjBL for improving vocabulary retention through the creation of an illustrated English dictionary, especially at the junior secondary school level within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by investigating how the integration of GBA and PjBL can strengthen students' vocabulary retention through the development of an illustrated English dictionary project among ninth-grade students at MTsN 6 Kediri.