

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study, and the definition of key terms.

A. Background of The Study

Vocabulary has long been recognized as a fundamental component of language proficiency and a key factor in learners' success in acquiring a foreign language. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in enabling learners to comprehend texts, participate in communication, and develop overall language proficiency.¹ Without sufficient vocabulary, learners may struggle not only to understand individual sentences but also to construct meaning and engage in meaningful language use. This issue becomes more evident in EFL contexts where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited, making vocabulary learning heavily dependent on classroom instruction. In such conditions, vocabulary can become one of the major challenges that hinder learners' language development, highlighting the importance of how vocabulary is taught in the classroom.²

Vocabulary learning is not merely a process of memorizing isolated words, but involves understanding how words function within meaningful contexts and are used in communication. Learners need to develop not only the ability to recall word meanings but also to interpret, connect, and apply them appropriately in different situations. Recent studies highlight that relying solely on rote memorization tends to support short-term recall, while contextualized learning enables deeper comprehension and more effective

¹ Hafsa Pir Mukhtar, Zuraina Ali, and Ruhil Amal, "The Importance of Vocabulary in Reading among EFL Learners," *European Proceedings of Educational Sciences* 7 (September 22, 2023): 681–691.

² Shin, Ji-Won, and Jie Young Kim. "Effects of Exposure Frequency, Depth of Processing, and Activity Repetition Types on Vocabulary Learning." *English Teaching* 78, no. 4 (December 18, 2023): 293–322.

long-term retention of vocabulary.³ Vocabulary acquisition also involves cognitive processes through which learners connect new lexical knowledge with their existing knowledge and reinforce it through repeated language use and interaction.⁴ Rather than emphasizing memorization alone, effective vocabulary instruction should provide learners with meaningful exposure and opportunities to actively use vocabulary in authentic contexts.

Recent developments in vocabulary teaching have shown a significant shift from traditional rote memorization toward more meaningful and learner-centered approaches. Instead of focusing solely on repetition and memorization of word lists, contemporary practices emphasize learners' active involvement in constructing meaning and using vocabulary in context. Studies indicate that learners are gradually moving away from memorization-based learning toward more analytical and context-based understanding of vocabulary.⁵ In addition, research highlights that effective vocabulary acquisition is closely associated with the use of learning strategies and active engagement rather than passive reception of information.⁶ This shift is also reflected in the increasing adoption of student-centered approaches, which encourage learners to participate actively, collaborate, and apply vocabulary in meaningful situations.⁷ As vocabulary learning becomes increasingly learner-centered, the teacher's role also shifts from simply delivering vocabulary to creating learning

³ Ganesan, P., Aziz, A. B. A., & Ismail, H. H. (2025). Comparing Rote Memorization and Contextual Learning in Vocabulary Acquisition among Upper Primary ESL Students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 14(2)

⁴ Nurfitriyani, A., Cahyaningsih, I., Anora, N., Rahmawati, P. F., & Istianah, R. (2025). EFL Learners' Memory Strategies in Vocabulary Learning: A Psycholinguistic Perspective. *Studies in Language Education and Culture (SeLEC)*, 1(2), 82–95

⁵ Khairunnisa, K., & Daulay, S. H. (2025). Exploring EFL students' perspectives on vocabulary learning through SkELL: A case study. *Celtic a Journal of Culture English Language Teaching Literature and Linguistics*, 12(2), 754–773.

⁶ Taye, T., & Lodebo, T. (2026). The relationship between vocabulary learning strategies, reading comprehension, and motivation among secondary school EFL learners. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 13, 102516.

⁷ Hariyati, Efa Nur, and Niswa Aghisty. "Student Vocabulary Learning through Content in Non-English Classrooms: A Systematic Review." *REGISTER: Journal of English Language Teaching of FBS-Unimed*, vol. 14, no. 3, 30 Sept. 2025, pp. 19–30.

experiences that encourage learners to explore, discuss, and use new words meaningfully. This broader perspective has gradually reshaped how vocabulary instruction is understood in EFL classrooms.

Despite the shift toward more meaningful and learner-centered approaches, the reality of vocabulary teaching in many EFL classrooms still reflects more traditional practices. Several studies have shown that teachers frequently rely on translation, repetition, and memorization of word lists as primary techniques for teaching vocabulary. For instance, research indicates that repetition drills and translation remain among the most commonly used strategies in EFL classrooms due to their practicality and perceived effectiveness in helping students understand word meanings.⁸ Similarly, other findings reveal that vocabulary instruction is often dominated by memorizing word lists without sufficient contextualization, which can limit students' engagement and deeper understanding of vocabulary use.⁹ In addition, classroom practices are still largely teacher-centered, where teachers play a dominant role in delivering vocabulary knowledge while students take a more passive position in the learning process.¹⁰ These conditions suggest that there remains a gap between current theoretical developments and actual classroom practices in vocabulary teaching.

The continued use of traditional vocabulary teaching practices has important implications for students' language learning. Studies have shown that limited vocabulary knowledge can reduce students' participation in classroom activities and negatively affect their overall academic performance, as learners often struggle to follow instructions and express

⁸ Kusumawati, B. I., & Arifin, S. (2024). Effective vocabulary teaching techniques for EFL teachers in primary classrooms. *JETAL Journal of English Teaching & Applied Linguistic*, 6(1), 37–46.

⁹ Setiya Annisa, Icha, and Pasca Kalisa. "Pre-Service Teachers' Perspectives on the Use of Wordwall in Vocabulary Teaching Article Info." *Journal of English Language Teaching*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2017, p. 50229.

¹⁰ Haque, Arina, et al. "Haque et Al. | Teaching Vocabulary in a Digital Era." *Linguistics, and Literature*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2024, pp. 225–245.

their ideas in English.¹¹ As a result, students may become passive, less confident, and increasingly dependent on teacher explanations rather than actively engaging in the learning process. Furthermore, research indicates that passive learning environments tend to limit students' opportunities to practice and internalize vocabulary meaningfully, which weakens long-term retention and application.¹² These conditions suggest that vocabulary learning challenges are not solely caused by learners' limitations, but are also closely related to how instruction is designed and implemented in the classroom. In this regard, the role of the teacher becomes crucial in facilitating meaningful vocabulary learning, as teachers are responsible for creating learning environments that encourage active participation, provide appropriate guidance, and support students in developing their vocabulary knowledge effectively.¹³

In EFL contexts, the limited exposure to English beyond the classroom significantly shapes how vocabulary is learned and practiced. Studies have shown that learners in such environments often rely heavily on classroom instruction as their primary source of language input, due to the lack of opportunities to encounter and use English in their daily lives.¹⁴ This reliance on classroom-based learning may restrict students' chances to interact with authentic language, resulting in limited opportunities to practice and reinforce newly acquired vocabulary. Furthermore, research indicates that EFL learners tend to depend on structured instructional settings and available resources, as independent engagement with English

¹¹ Mohammed Ahmed, Elamin Ahmed. "The Difficulties Faced by EFL Learners When Using English as the Medium of Instruction in the Classroom." *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, vol. 7, no. 12, 17 Nov. 2025,

¹² Tiansoodeenon, M., & Prasongngern, P. (2025). Enhancing Active Learning through the Interactive Learning Platform to Improve Thai EFL Students' English Vocabulary, Grammatical Retention, and Motivation in English Learning. *Higher Education Studies*, 15(1), 232.

¹³ Perales, W., & Ulla, M. B. (2025). Technology in EFL contextual teaching and learning: Teachers' practices and perspectives in a Thai university. *Heliyon*, 11(17), e44169.

¹⁴ Dewi, K. S., Padmadewi, N. N., Artini, L. P., Adnyani, N. L. P. S., & Sugihartini, N. (2026). Multimodal video integration in primary English classrooms: Improving First-Grade students' vocabulary mastery. *Utamax Journal of Ultimate Research and Trends in Education*, 8(1), 1–13.

outside the classroom remains minimal.¹⁵ As a result, the classroom becomes the central environment where vocabulary development occurs, placing greater responsibility on instructional practices to provide meaningful exposure, guided practice, and opportunities for active language use.

At the junior high school level, vocabulary learning presents additional challenges as learners are still in the early stages of developing their lexical knowledge. Studies indicate that EFL students at this level often face difficulties in understanding and retaining new vocabulary, as their vocabulary size and language exposure are still limited¹⁶. In addition, junior high school learners tend to rely on simple and practical strategies, such as asking the teacher for meanings or using direct translation, rather than applying more complex or independent vocabulary learning strategies.¹⁷ This suggests that learners at this stage have not yet fully developed the ability to manage vocabulary learning autonomously. Furthermore, research highlights that effective vocabulary instruction at the junior high school level requires structured support, guidance, and interactive learning environments provided by teachers to facilitate students' engagement and vocabulary development.¹⁸ Therefore, the role of the teacher becomes increasingly important in guiding students' vocabulary learning processes, particularly in helping them move from passive reception toward more active and meaningful engagement with language.

¹⁵ Hidaka, Y. (2026). Challenges in Vocabulary Learning in EFL Settings: Insights from a Case Study of University Students in Japan. In *Chapter Challenges in Vocabulary Learning in EFL Settings: Insights from a Case Study of University Students in Japan* (pp. 111–124).

¹⁶ Aji, N. (2026). Improving junior high school students' vocabulary in descriptive reading using Quizizz E-Flashcards. *RETAIN Journal of Research in English Language Teaching*, 14(01), 17–24.

¹⁷ Dharma, Zulfia. *A Survey Study On Students' Vocabulary Learning In An Indonesian Junior High School Department Of English Language Education Faculty Of Psychology And Socio-Cultural Sciences Universitas Islam Indonesia Yogyakarta*. 2024.

¹⁸ Andriani, Agis, et al. "TEACHERS' STRATEGIES in TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY to YOUNG LEARNERS." *Journal of Literature and Language Teaching*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2025, pp. 190–220,

In response to these challenges, the use of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) has gained increasing attention as an essential component in vocabulary development. Vocabulary learning is not only influenced by the amount of exposure learners receive, but also by the strategies they use to process, store, and retrieve lexical information. Vocabulary learning strategies refer to the specific techniques and processes employed by learners to understand, remember, and use new words effectively, including discovering meanings, retaining them in long-term memory, and applying them in appropriate contexts.¹⁹ Research has shown that learners who actively use a variety of strategies tend to achieve better vocabulary development compared to those who rely solely on memorization²⁰. However, the effectiveness of these strategies depends on learners' ability to select and apply them appropriately, which is often still limited among EFL learners. Studies also indicate that learners' strategy use is influenced by instructional support and learning environments, suggesting that teacher guidance plays a crucial role in helping students develop effective vocabulary learning strategies.²¹ Therefore, students at the junior high school level may require structured guidance and support from teachers to help them engage with vocabulary learning strategies more effectively.

One practical form of vocabulary learning strategies that has been commonly implemented in classroom settings is vocabulary collection practices, particularly through note-taking activities and the use of vocabulary notebooks. These practices enable learners to record unfamiliar words along with their meanings and contextual information, allowing them to organize and revisit vocabulary systematically. Research has shown that vocabulary notebooks can support deeper cognitive processing and enhance

¹⁹ Awal, Arpinda Syifa'a. "The Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategy by Undergraduate Students." *Linguistic, English Education and Art (LEEA) Journal*, vol. 5, no. 2, 30 June 2022, pp. 216–223.

²⁰ Zhang, T., & Liang, L. (2024). Vocabulary Learning Strategies of English as a Foreign/Second Language. *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media*, 45(1), 1–5.

²¹ Utami, N. P., & Daulay, S. H. (2024). Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Indonesian EFL Undergraduate Students. *Scope Journal of English Language Teaching*, 9(1), 354.

vocabulary retention by encouraging repeated interaction with new words.

²² Similarly, note-taking has been identified as an active learning process in which learners engage in selecting, processing, and storing lexical information, contributing to better recall and understanding of vocabulary.

²³ However, while these practices offer valuable support for vocabulary learning, their effectiveness largely depends on how they are structured and guided in classroom instruction. Without proper guidance, vocabulary collection activities may become mechanical and fail to promote meaningful learning.

Among various vocabulary collection practices, the vocabulary notebook has become one of the most widely recommended tools in language learning. A vocabulary notebook is generally understood as a personal notebook used to record newly encountered and useful lexical items for future learning. Rather than simply listing word meanings, learners are encouraged to include additional lexical information such as parts of speech, pronunciation, word forms, collocations, synonyms, antonyms, semantics, and example sentences. By systematically organizing vocabulary in this way, learners are able to review previously learned words, monitor their vocabulary development, and gradually expand their lexical knowledge. However, research also suggests that the educational value of vocabulary notebooks depends not only on recording lexical items but also on how teachers guide learners to select, organize, revisit, and meaningfully use the recorded vocabulary in classroom learning.²⁴ This indicates that vocabulary notebooks function most effectively when they are integrated

²² Rahmawati, Ana, et al. "THE IMPLEMENTATION of VOCABULARY JOURNAL in ENGLISH LEARNING: A CASE STUDY at SMP NEGERI 2 BLITAR." *JOSAR (Journal of Students Academic Research)*, vol. 10, no. 1, 11 May 2025, pp. 179–189.

²³ Nurfitriyani, Aisyah, et al. "EFL Learners' Memory Strategies in Vocabulary Learning: A Psycholinguistic Perspective." *Studies in Language, Education, and Culture (SeLEC)*, vol. 1, no. 2, 30 Nov. 2025, pp. 82–95.

²⁴ Sultan Alhatmi, "Vocabulary Notebook Keeping as a Word Learning Strategy: State of the Art Review of Research on L2 Learners' Use of the Strategy," *British Journal of English Linguistics* 7, no. 4 (2019): 45–46.

into structured instructional activities rather than used merely as a personal record of new words.

Responding to the need for a more structured and teacher-guided approach to vocabulary collection, one instructional strategy that integrates learner autonomy with teacher facilitation is the Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS). Originally introduced by Haggard, VSS is an interactive approach to vocabulary learning in which learners select words from texts that they consider important or meaningful for further study. In its implementation, VSS is characterized by several key processes, including identifying unfamiliar or significant words, discussing their meanings, and justifying the reasons for selecting those words. These processes encourage students to actively participate in vocabulary learning and develop awareness of word meanings through interaction and reflection.²⁵ Furthermore, VSS promotes collaborative learning, as students work together to analyze vocabulary, negotiate meaning, and share their understanding with peers, which supports deeper comprehension and critical thinking. However, despite its emphasis on student involvement, the implementation of VSS still requires guidance from the teacher, particularly in facilitating discussion and directing appropriate word selection. Therefore, VSS can be understood as a form of guided participation, in which students actively engage in vocabulary learning while teachers provide scaffolding to support meaningful and accurate learning.

Although numerous studies have investigated vocabulary teaching strategies, including the Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS), most of them primarily focus on measuring their effectiveness in improving students' vocabulary achievement and language skills. For instance, several studies have demonstrated that VSS has a significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension through experimental

²⁵ Azzahra, Javita, and Praditya Putri Utami. "Implementing Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy in Teaching Vocabulary Mastery to Secondary Junior High School." *TOFEDU: The Future of Education Journal*, vol. 4, 2025.

research designs²⁶. Similarly, recent research in vocabulary instruction tends to emphasize outcomes such as vocabulary gains, retention, and performance improvement, often through quantitative approaches.²⁷ However, despite the growing body of research on the effectiveness of vocabulary strategies, limited attention has been given to how these strategies are actually implemented in real classroom settings, particularly from the perspective of teachers' practices. Existing studies rarely explore how teachers organize, guide, and adapt vocabulary learning strategies such as VSS in authentic classroom contexts. This indicates a gap between theoretical and experimental findings and the realities of classroom practice, highlighting the need for further research that examines how teachers implement vocabulary teaching strategies in practice, especially in EFL junior high school settings.

This study is grounded in the researcher's teaching experience during a teaching practicum at MTsN 3 Blitar, where the implementation of vocabulary instruction revealed interesting classroom dynamics. During the learning process, the teacher applied an approach that involved students in identifying and discussing new vocabulary, which reflected key principles of the Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS). Students appeared to be more engaged and actively participated in selecting and exploring new words, although the way the strategy was implemented varied depending on classroom conditions. This experience raised important questions regarding how such strategies are actually practiced by teachers in real classroom settings, particularly in terms of how teachers guide, organize, and facilitate students' vocabulary learning. Therefore, this study aims to explore the

²⁶ Febrisera, L., & Sugirin. (2021). The Effectiveness of Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy on Students' reading and Vocabulary Achievement: A Quasi-Experimental Research. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 8(2), 291–321. <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v8i2.2949>

²⁷ Nitami, Kadek, and Made Santosa. *LETS Journal of Linguistics and English Teaching Studies a Systematic Literature Review: The Effectiveness of Vocabulary Size Tests on Students English Vocabulary and Writing Skills*. 31 Dec. 2024.

teacher's practices in teaching vocabulary by using the Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS) in an EFL junior high school context, focusing on how the strategy is implemented and how the teacher supports students' learning process.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How does the teacher's implement the Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS) in the Grade VII classroom at MTsN 3 Blitar?
2. How does the teacher's guide and facilitate students during the implementation of VSS in vocabulary learning?
3. What challenges does the teacher's face in implementing VSS in the classroom?

C. Research Objective

Based on the formulation of the research questions, the objectives of this study are:

1. To explore how the teacher's implements the Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS) in the Grade VII classroom at MTsN 3 Blitar.
2. To explore how the teacher's guides and facilitates students' engagement during the implementation of VSS.
3. To identify the challenges faced by the teacher's in implementing VSS in the classroom.

D. Significance of The Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of vocabulary learning and teaching in EFL contexts.

1. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to discussions on vocabulary instruction by providing an understanding of how the Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS) is implemented in an actual classroom context. Unlike

previous studies that mainly examine the effectiveness or outcomes of VSS, this study focuses on the instructional process, particularly how teachers organize, guide, and facilitate vocabulary learning activities through the strategy. The findings also extend discussions on teacher-supported vocabulary learning by showing how VSS can be adapted as a guided and interactive classroom practice.

2. Practical Significance

a. For English Teachers

This study provides insights into how VSS can be implemented in classroom practice, particularly in terms of how teachers manage classroom activities, guide students' participation, and adapt the strategy to specific learning contexts. The findings may serve as a reference for teachers who seek to understand how to apply vocabulary learning strategies in a more structured and guided manner.

b. For Students

Although this study primarily examines teacher practices, the findings also provide an understanding of students' involvement in vocabulary-learning activities through VSS. The study highlights how teacher guidance, classroom interaction, and the use of private dictionaries may support students in developing vocabulary-learning habits and participating more actively in the learning process.

c. For Future Researchers

For future researchers, this study may provide a basis for further investigation of VSS implementation from different perspectives. Future studies may explore the application of VSS in various educational settings, examine students' experiences in greater depth, or investigate how the strategy influences vocabulary development through different research approaches.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on the English teacher's practices in implementing the Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS) in two Grade VII classes at MTsN 3 Blitar. The scope of the study is limited to three main aspects: the teacher's instructional procedures in applying VSS, the ways the teacher guides and facilitates students' engagement during the learning process, and the contextual factors that influence the implementation of the strategy. The inclusion of two classes is not intended for comparison, but rather to capture the consistency of the teacher's practices across different classroom settings. Data were collected through classroom observation, interviews, and documentation within a natural instructional environment. Due to the descriptive and context-bound nature of this study, the findings are not intended to be generalized broadly, but to provide in-depth insights into the teacher's practices in implementing VSS in this particular context.

F. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid ambiguity and ensure clarity, several key terms used in this study are defined as follows:

1. Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS)

Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS) is a vocabulary-learning strategy developed by Haggard that encourages learners to actively identify, select, and discuss words they consider important or meaningful for learning. The strategy emphasizes learners' involvement in discovering vocabulary and constructing meaning through classroom interaction and discussion. In this study, VSS refers to the implementation of this strategy in an EFL classroom context where the teacher applies and facilitates vocabulary-learning activities using the principles of vocabulary collection and discussion.

2. Teacher's Practices

Teacher practices refer to the instructional actions, decisions, and behaviors performed by teachers during the teaching and learning process. These practices include how teachers organize learning

activities, provide instructional support, facilitate student participation, and respond to classroom situations. In this study, teacher practices specifically refer to the ways in which the English teacher implements and manages VSS during vocabulary teaching activities.

3. Vocabulary Notebook (Private Dictionary)

Private dictionary refers to a student-created vocabulary record used to collect and store vocabulary items learned during the learning process. Unlike a conventional dictionary, a private dictionary is personally developed and maintained by learners according to their learning needs. In this study, private dictionary refers to the vocabulary notebook created and used by students as part of the vocabulary-learning activities implemented by the teacher.