

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research background, three research questions, three research purposes, the scope of research, the conceptual framework, the research hypothesis, and previous studies.

A. Background

Vocabulary has an important role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it supports the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Vocabulary knowledge is one of the basic elements of language ability and influences students' ability to understand and use English effectively. Richards & Renandya (2022) state that vocabulary is an important part of language competence that affects learners' performance in various language skills. Students who have limited vocabulary knowledge often face difficulties in expressing ideas, communicating, and participating in classroom activities.

Although English has been introduced from earlier levels of education, vocabulary learning is still a challenge in the Indonesian EFL context. Many senior high school students experience difficulties in understanding English texts, especially in understanding word meaning. Nation (2001) explains that learners with limited knowledge of word meaning may have difficulties in comprehending texts and using vocabulary appropriately in communication.

Similarly, Thornbury (2002) states that understanding word meaning is an important foundation of vocabulary knowledge. Without sufficient understanding of word meaning, students may experience difficulties in developing other English skills. As a result, students who have limited understanding of word meaning often depend on teachers' explanations and translation, which may reduce their confidence and participation in English learning activities.

According to Graves (2016), effective vocabulary instruction should involve students in meaningful learning activities instead of focusing only on memorisation. In many classrooms, vocabulary teaching still uses traditional methods, such as memorising word lists, translating words, and repeating vocabulary items. Although these methods can help students remember new words

for a short time, they may not help students develop deeper understanding, long-term memory, and the ability to use vocabulary in different contexts. Therefore, students may easily forget the vocabulary they have learned and experience difficulties when applying word meanings in real situations.

Based on a preliminary classroom observation conducted by the researcher, many tenth-grade students experienced difficulties in understanding word meaning and using vocabulary appropriately in context. Many students had difficulties identifying the meanings of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs found in English texts and classroom activities. Students also found it difficult to understand vocabulary based on the context, which affected their understanding of sentences and texts. Furthermore, students often depended on memorisation and translation strategies and showed limited involvement during vocabulary learning activities. This condition indicated that the current teaching strategy had not fully supported meaningful vocabulary learning because students tended to memorize words without deeply understanding their meanings and contextual use. Therefore, an interactive and structured teaching strategy was needed to improve students' understanding of word meaning.

One strategy that can support meaningful vocabulary learning is the Word Mapping Strategy. Harris & Graham (1996) explain that word mapping helps students understand word meaning by organizing vocabulary into visual forms, including definitions, examples, characteristics, and word relationships. Graves (2016) also states that effective vocabulary instruction should encourage students to explore word meanings through different forms of representation, including visual tools. In addition, Marzano (2010) emphasises that visual representations can help students organise and remember new information more effectively. Through word mapping activities, students can connect new words with their previous knowledge, which may help them develop a better understanding of vocabulary.

Several previous studies have shown the effectiveness of the Word Mapping Strategy and other visual-based vocabulary learning strategies in improving students' understanding of word meaning. Studies conducted by Budi et al. (2021) Edy & Amiruddin (2019), Marianca et al (2022), Magdalena Peda Milla & Wutsqah

(2023) , Zahedi & Abdi (2012), and Al-Hinnawi (2012) reported positive results regarding the use of visual mapping strategies in vocabulary learning. However, studies that specifically focus on students' understanding of word meaning at the senior high school level in the Indonesian EFL context are still limited.

Based on the explanation above, this research aims to investigate the effect of the Word Mapping Strategy on students' understanding of word meaning through a quasi-experimental design. This research is expected to provide evidence about the effectiveness of the Word Mapping Strategy in improving students' understanding of word meaning. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of meaningful vocabulary teaching strategies in the Indonesian EFL context.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, students' understanding of word meaning remains a challenge for senior high school students. Therefore, an effective instructional strategy is needed to support students in understanding word meaning. The Word Mapping Strategy is expected to help students develop their understanding of vocabulary through structured and meaningful learning activities.

Based on these considerations, this research aims to examine the effect of the Word Mapping Strategy on students' understanding of word meaning. The research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

- a. What is the score of students' understanding of word meaning among tenth-grade students who are taught using the Word Mapping Strategy?
- b. What is the score of students' understanding of word meaning among tenth-grade students who are taught without using the Word Mapping Strategy?
- c. What is the difference in students' understanding of word meaning between students who are taught using the Word Mapping Strategy and those who are taught using conventional teaching methods?

C. Research Purposes

This research aims to investigate the effect of the Word Mapping Strategy on students' understanding of word meaning among tenth-grade students. Specifically, the objectives of this study are formulated as follows:

- a. To identify the score of students' understanding of word meaning among tenth-grade students who are taught using the Word Mapping Strategy.
- b. To identify the score of students' understanding of word meaning among tenth-grade students who are taught without using the Word Mapping Strategy.
- c. To examine the difference in students' understanding of word meaning between the experimental group and the control group after the implementation of the Word Mapping Strategy.

D. Research Significance

This study is expected to provide contributions for English teachers, students, schools, researchers, and other related parties. The findings of this study are expected to provide information about the use of the Word Mapping Strategy in supporting students' understanding of word meaning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Furthermore, this study may become a reference for developing meaningful vocabulary teaching strategies at the senior high school level. The significance of this study is described as follows:

- a. Theoretical significance

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the understanding of vocabulary instruction in English language learning, especially in relation to students' understanding of word meaning. By investigating the effect of the Word Mapping Strategy, this study provides evidence about how visual-based vocabulary learning activities can support students in understanding word meanings. The findings of this study may support existing theories of vocabulary learning and provide references for future researchers who are interested in vocabulary teaching strategies in the EFL context.

b. Practical Significance

Practically, this study provides English teachers with information about the implementing of the Word Mapping Strategy to support students' understanding of word meaning. This strategy can be used as an alternative teaching strategy to create more meaningful vocabulary learning activities by helping students organise and understand new words.

For students, the implementing of the Word Mapping Strategy may help them understand word meanings more clearly and encourage their participation in vocabulary learning activities. For schools, especially SMA Karya Budi, the findings of this study may provide consideration in developing vocabulary teaching practices through the use of meaningful learning strategies. In addition, this study can become a reference for future researchers who are interested in investigating vocabulary learning strategies in different educational contexts, grade levels, or language skills.

E. Research Scope

This study is conducted among tenth-grade students at SMA Karya Budi in the 2026 academic year. The population of this study consists of 202 tenth-grade students. The sample of this study consists of two intact classes with a total of 60 students. The experimental group consists of 30 students, including 14 male students and 16 female students, while the control group consists of 30 students, including 17 male students and 13 female students. The selection of intact classes is considered appropriate because random assignment of individual students is often difficult to apply in educational research settings Fraenkel et al. (2012) This study uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design using a pre-test and post-test. According to Creswell (2012), quasi-experimental research allows researchers to examine the effect of an instructional strategy in a natural classroom setting without changing the existing class structure. Therefore, the use of intact classes in this study is considered appropriate for examining the effect of the Word Mapping Strategy.

The scope of this study is limited to vocabulary learning, specifically focusing on students' understanding of word meaning. Other English language skills, such

as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, are not examined in this study. Although the implementation of the Word Mapping Strategy involves writing activities, writing is only used as a learning activity to support students' understanding of word meaning and is not measured as a separate language skill.

F. Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the concept of vocabulary learning that focuses on students' understanding of word meaning as an important part of vocabulary knowledge. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge consists of three main components, namely form, meaning, and use. Among these components, meaning is an important aspect because students need to understand the meaning of words before they can use them properly. Nation & Webb (2011) further explain that a lack of understanding of word meaning may affect the development of students' vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, this study focuses on students' understanding of word meaning as an important aspect of vocabulary learning.

Thornbury (2002) explains that understanding word meaning is an important step in vocabulary learning because words are the basic units of language. Students who have limited understanding of word meaning may experience difficulties in understanding texts, expressing ideas, and communicating in English. Similarly, Schmitt (2010) states that vocabulary learning begins with understanding the meaning of words before developing broader vocabulary knowledge. Harmer (2007) also emphasises that learners need to understand both the meaning and the use of words in different contexts to communicate effectively.

Recent research has also shown the importance of understanding word meaning in vocabulary learning. Allal-Sumoto et al. (2023) found that deeper vocabulary knowledge helps learners process sentences more effectively in a second language. This finding indicates that understanding word meaning not only helps students recognise words but also supports their ability to use English in communication.

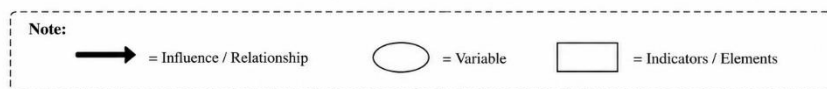
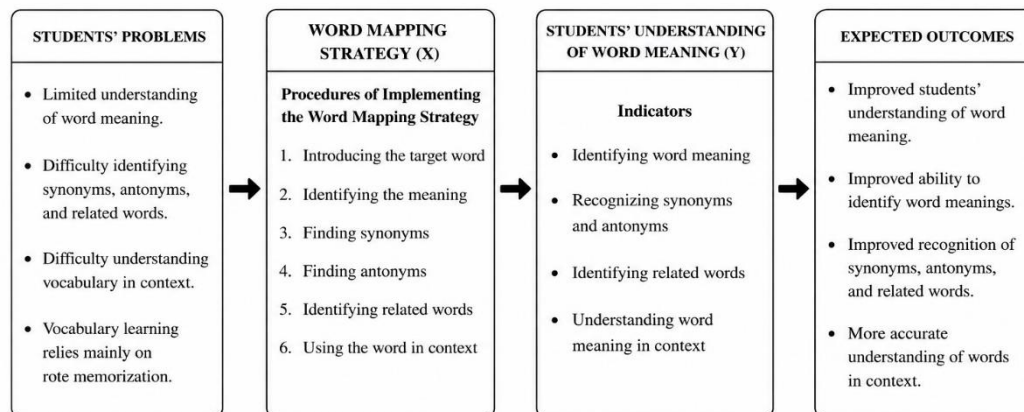
One strategy that can support students' understanding of word meaning is the Word Mapping Strategy. Harris & Graham (1996) explain that Word Mapping Strategy helps students organize vocabulary by connecting a target word with its meaning, synonymy, antonym, related words and using the word in context . Graves

(2016) states that effective vocabulary learning should involve students in exploring word meanings through meaningful activities. Furthermore, Marzano (2010) explains that visual representations can help students organize and remember new information more effectively.

In this study, the Word Mapping Strategy is implemented through six main components adapted from Harris & Graham (1996), Nation (2001), Thornbury (2002), and Graves (2016). The components include target word, meaning, synonym, antonym, related words, and example sentence. These components help students develop connections between new vocabulary and their previous knowledge. Through these activities, students are expected to understand word meanings, recognise relationships between words, and use vocabulary appropriately in context.

Through the implementation of the Word Mapping Strategy, students are expected to develop better understanding of word meaning. This improvement can be seen through their ability to understand word meanings, identify synonyms and antonyms, recognise related words, and understand word usage through example sentences. Based on the theories and previous studies discussed above, the Word Mapping Strategy is considered an appropriate strategy to support students' understanding of word meaning. By organizing vocabulary through visual mapping, students can learn vocabulary not only through memorisation but also through meaningful connections between words. Therefore, this study assumes that the Word Mapping Strategy has a positive effect on students' understanding of word meaning.

In this study, the Word Mapping Strategy functions as the independent variable, while students' understanding of word meaning functions as the dependent variable. The effect of the Word Mapping Strategy is examined through a quasi-experimental design using pre-test and post-test. The relationship between these variables is presented in the conceptual framework below.



This framework illustrates that students' problems in understanding word meaning can be addressed through the implementation of the Word Mapping Strategy. The strategy is expected to improve students' understanding of word meaning, which is reflected in the achievement of the expected outcomes.

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

G. Hypothesis

This study involves two variables, namely the independent variable and the dependent variable. The independent variable in this study is the Word Mapping Strategy, while the dependent variable is students' understanding of word meaning in vocabulary learning.

Based on the research objectives and the quasi-experimental design involving experimental and control groups, the hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

1) H_0 (Null Hypothesis):

There is no significant effect of the Word Mapping Strategy on students' understanding of word meaning among tenth-grade students at SMA Karya Budi.

2) H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis):

There is a significant effect of the Word Mapping Strategy on students' understanding of word meaning among tenth-grade students at SMA Karya Budi.

H. Previous Studies

Several previous studies have investigated the effectiveness of the Word Mapping Strategy in improving students' understanding word meaning across different educational contexts.

The first study was conducted by Budi et al. (2021) to examine the effect of the Word Mapping Strategy on students' understanding of word meaning. The study used an experimental research design involving vocational high school students at SMK PGRI Banyuputih. The data were collected through vocabulary tests in the form of pre-test and post-test. The findings showed that students who learned through the Word Mapping Strategy achieved higher vocabulary scores after the treatment. These findings indicated that the strategy could support students in understanding word meaning through vocabulary learning activities. This study is similar to the present study because both studies examine the effect of the Word Mapping Strategy on students' understanding of word meaning using a quantitative approach. However, the previous study was conducted at a vocational high school, while the present study focuses on tenth-grade students at a senior high school. In addition, the present study specifically focuses on students' understanding of word meaning as an aspect of vocabulary knowledge.

The second study was conducted by Edy and Amiruddin (2019) to examine the effectiveness of the Word Mapping Strategy in improving students' understanding of word meaning at the junior high school level. The study employed a quasi-experimental research design involving an experimental group and a control group at SMP Negeri 3 Kapontori. The data were collected using vocabulary achievement tests administered before and after the treatment. The findings showed that students who were taught using the Word Mapping Strategy achieved better vocabulary improvement compared to students who received conventional instruction. This study is similar to the present study because both studies investigate the effectiveness of the Word Mapping Strategy using a quasi-experimental design. However, the previous study involved junior high school students, whereas the present study focuses on tenth-grade students at the senior high school level.

The third study was conducted by Marianca et al. (2022) to investigate the use of the Word Mapping Strategy in improving students' receptive vocabulary mastery. The researchers used a quasi-experimental research design involving junior high school students. The data were collected through receptive vocabulary tests administered in the form of pre-test and post-test. The findings showed that students in the experimental group achieved higher receptive vocabulary scores than students in the control group. Although the previous study focused on receptive vocabulary mastery, receptive vocabulary requires students to recognise and understand word meanings before they can comprehend written texts. Therefore, this study is related to the present research. However, while the previous study focused on receptive vocabulary mastery, the present study specifically investigates students' understanding of word meaning as an important aspect of vocabulary knowledge.

The fourth study was conducted by Agasabila, Sutyono, & Nurchurifiani, (2023) to improve students' understanding of word meaning through the implementation of the Word Mapping Strategy. The study used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design involving eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 16 Bandar Lampung. Vocabulary tests, observation sheets, and field notes were used as research instruments to collect the data. The findings showed that students' vocabulary scores and classroom participation improved continuously throughout the research cycles. This study is similar to the present study because both studies apply the Word Mapping Strategy to support vocabulary learning through meaningful learning activities. However, the previous study used a Classroom Action Research design, while the present study uses a quasi-experimental design to examine the effect of the strategy statistically. In addition, the previous study involved eleventh-grade students, whereas the present study focuses on tenth-grade students.

The fifth study was conducted by Magdalena Peda Milla & Wutsqah (2023) to investigate the use of the Word Mapping Strategy in improving students' vocabulary learning. The study employed a Classroom Action Research design involving junior high school students at SMP Ignatius Slamet Riyadi, East Jakarta. Vocabulary tests

and classroom observations were used to collect the research data. The findings indicated that the Word Mapping Strategy improved students' understanding of word meaning and encouraged more active participation during vocabulary learning activities. This study is similar to the present study because both studies investigate the use of the Word Mapping Strategy in vocabulary instruction. However, the previous study was conducted at the junior high school level using a Classroom Action Research design, while the present study is conducted at the senior high school level using a quasi-experimental design.

The sixth study was conducted by Zahedi and Abdi (2012) to investigate the effect of the Semantic Mapping Strategy on EFL learners' vocabulary learning. The study used a true experimental research design involving forty Iranian EFL learners who were randomly divided into an experimental group and a control group. Vocabulary achievement tests were administered as pre-test and post-test to measure students' vocabulary learning before and after the treatment. The findings showed that students who were taught using the Semantic Mapping Strategy achieved higher vocabulary scores than those who received traditional vocabulary instruction. Although Semantic Mapping and Word Mapping are different strategies, both strategies use visual organisation to help students understand relationships between words. Therefore, this study is relevant to the present research because it supports the use of visual-based strategies in vocabulary learning. However, the previous study focused on the Semantic Mapping Strategy and involved Iranian EFL learners, while the present study focuses on the Word Mapping Strategy among tenth-grade students at an Indonesian senior high school.

The seventh study was conducted by Al-Hinnawi (2012) to investigate the effect of the Graphic Organizer Strategy on university students' English vocabulary building. The study employed an experimental research design involving 102 university students who were enrolled in a General English course at Zarqa University College, Jordan. Vocabulary pre-tests and post-tests were used to measure students' vocabulary achievement before and after the treatment. The findings showed that students who learned through the Graphic Organizer Strategy achieved higher vocabulary scores than those who received traditional instruction.

The strategy also helped students organize vocabulary information visually, including word meanings, pronunciation, parts of speech, synonyms, antonyms, and example sentences. Graphic organizers are a broader type of visual learning strategy, and the Word Mapping Strategy is one form of this approach. Therefore, this study provides additional support for the use of visual strategies in vocabulary learning. However, the previous study focused on university students and the Graphic Organizer Strategy, whereas the present study focuses on the Word Mapping Strategy among tenth-grade senior high school students.

Based on the previous studies discussed above, several research gaps can be identified. First, most previous studies focused on vocabulary mastery, vocabulary achievement, vocabulary learning, or vocabulary building in general. Although these studies provide useful findings about vocabulary improvement, fewer studies specifically focus on students' understanding of word meaning as an important part of vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, further research is needed to examine students' understanding of word meaning as a specific aspect of vocabulary learning.

Second, previous studies were mostly conducted among junior high school students, vocational high school students, or university students. Some studies focused on junior high school learners, while others investigated vocational students and university learners. Meanwhile, research involving tenth-grade students at the senior high school level, especially in the Indonesian EFL context, still needs further investigation. Therefore, this study focuses on tenth-grade students at SMA Karya Budi to provide evidence from a different educational context.

Third, previous researchers used various research designs, including Classroom Action Research, experimental research, and true experimental research. These studies showed that visual-based vocabulary strategies could support vocabulary learning. However, studies using a quasi-experimental design to examine the effect of the Word Mapping Strategy in Indonesian senior high school contexts are still limited. Therefore, this study applies a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test to examine the effect of the Word Mapping Strategy.

Fourth, previous studies generally measured vocabulary improvement through overall vocabulary achievement scores. However, fewer studies explained the specific components involved in the Word Mapping Strategy and their relationship with students' understanding of word meaning. Therefore, this study focuses on six components of the Word Mapping Strategy, including target word, meaning, synonym, antonym, related words, and example sentence. These components are used to support students in understanding word meaning through meaningful vocabulary learning activities.

Based on these research gaps, this study aims to investigate the effect of the Word Mapping Strategy on tenth-grade students' understanding of word meaning at SMA Karya Budi. This study employs a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test design to compare students who are taught using the Word Mapping Strategy and those who are taught using conventional teaching methods. Through this research, the study is expected to provide further evidence regarding the use of Word Mapping Strategy in vocabulary learning, especially in supporting students' understanding of word meaning.

