

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, which contains the reasons why the writer conducted the study using the Semantic Mapping technique to improve students' vocabulary mastery. This chapter also presents the study formulation and study purpose that guided the direction of the study. In addition, it outlines the significance of the study, which explains both the theoretical and practical benefits that the study was expected to provide. This chapter further includes the hypothesis as a provisional answer to the study questions. At the end, this chapter provides the definitions of key terms to ensure conceptual clarity and avoid misunderstanding for the reader.

A. Research Background

English has become a very important international language and is widely used in education, technology, and global communication. In this modern era, the ability to speak English is a skill that students need to master to support academic success and prepare for the world of work in the future. Among the various components of language skills, vocabulary occupies a very important position because it is the basis for developing other skills, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Without adequate vocabulary mastery, students have difficulty understanding texts, conveying ideas, and communicating effectively. Therefore, vocabulary mastery can be considered one of the main keys to success in learning English.

Although vocabulary is a very important aspect of English learning, the reality is that the vocabulary mastery of Grade VIII students still needs to be improved. Based on observations, students encounter challenges in several aspects of vocabulary mastery, namely quantity, meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. Among these aspects, the limited range of vocabulary and the difficulty in producing accurate pronunciation appear to be more prominent. These conditions make it harder for students to understand word meanings, write vocabulary correctly, and pronounce words according to appropriate pronunciation models. These challenges are influenced by students' differing levels of learning motivation and confidence. However, these conditions also indicate the need for more supportive learning strategies to help students develop their vocabulary mastery more effectively

Based on the preliminary observation conducted by the writer at Joseph Khatulistiwa Junior High School, it was found that the teacher had used several learning methods and utilized media such as dictionaries and textbooks to support learning activities. Some students seemed less motivated and less active in participating in learning activities, although there were also students who showed a willingness to learn and tried to master new vocabulary. The limited learning media available also made the vocabulary learning process less than optimal. This condition had an impact on students' vocabulary mastery, which still needed improvement, especially in terms of vocabulary quantity and pronunciation. This situation demonstrated the importance of implementing

learning strategies that not only improved students' vocabulary skills but also assessed their responds of the learning process and the techniques used.

The class chosen as the experimental class in this study was grade VIII at Joseph Khatulistiwa Junior High School. The selection of this class was based on observations and initial interviews with the English teacher, which showed that students in this class still experienced various problems in vocabulary mastery, particularly in vocabulary quantity and pronunciation. This condition made this class relevant as a study object because the writer intended to test whether the application of the Semantic Mapping technique could significantly improve students' vocabulary mastery and to explore students' perceptions of learning vocabulary through Semantic Mapping.

Semantic Mapping is a vocabulary teaching technique that presents the relationship between words visually in the form of a concept map or semantic map. In its application, students are asked to write down a key word and then connect it with other vocabulary that has related meanings. Through this process, students not only memorize vocabulary but also understand the meaning and context of each word. By using this technique, students are expected to improve their vocabulary quantity, comprehend word meanings, spell vocabulary correctly, and practice pronunciation through repeated use. Additionally, this study aimed to observe how students perceived the clarity, organization, and engagement of learning vocabulary using Semantic Mapping.

Based on the description of the problem, it could be concluded that the vocabulary mastery of Grade VIII students at Joseph Khatulistiwa Junior High

School still required improvement in English learning, especially regarding vocabulary quantity, understanding of meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. These conditions indicated that vocabulary mastery remained a critical area that needed more focused support to optimize students' English learning outcomes. To address these issues, more effective and interesting learning strategies were required so that students could improve their abilities and increase their motivation. One technique believed to be helpful is Semantic Mapping, a method that visually connects vocabulary through semantic mappings to facilitate students' understanding, retention, and engagement. Furthermore, examining students' perceptions of the learning process and the use of semantic mappings provides additional insight into the acceptability and effectiveness of this technique.

Therefore, this study entitled "The Effect of Semantic Mapping Technique on Students' Vocabulary Mastery of Eighth Grade Students at SMP Joseph Khatulistiwa" aims not only to determine the effectiveness of the Semantic Mapping technique in improving vocabulary mastery but also to investigate students' perspectives and perceptions regarding the use of Semantic Mapping in vocabulary learning. The findings are expected to contribute positively to English learning, especially in vocabulary acquisition, by providing evidence of both objective learning outcomes and students' subjective experiences.

B. Research Formulation

Based on the description of the background above, the study formulation of his study can be identified as follows:

1. What is the effect of the Semantic Mapping technique on the vocabulary mastery of Grade VIII students at Joseph Khatulistiwa Junior High School?
2. How do Grade VIII students at Joseph Khatulistiwa Junior High School response the implementation of the Semantic Mapping technique in vocabulary learning?

C. Research Purposes

Based on the problem purpose previously described the purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the effect of the Semantic Mapping technique on the vocabulary mastery of Grade VIII students at Joseph Khatulistiwa Junior High School.
2. To describe students' response toward the implementation of the Semantic Mapping technique in vocabulary learning of Grade VIII students at Joseph Khatulistiwa Junior High School.

D. Research Significance

The results of this pre-experiment study are expected to provide the following benefits:

1. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich theoretical studies on English vocabulary teaching, especially through the application of the Semantic

Mapping technique. The findings of this study can also serve as an additional reference for other researchers in the field of English education, especially those who want to examine vocabulary learning strategies at the junior high school level. Thus, this study can contribute to the development of English language teaching, especially in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes creativity, active student involvement, and the use of varied learning media.

2. Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide direct benefits for various parties involved in the English language learning process, including:
 - a. For teachers, this study is expected to help teachers add variations in vocabulary learning methods. Through the Semantic Mapping technique, teachers can teach vocabulary materials, especially on the topic of narrative texts, in a more structured, visual, and interesting way. This can increase the effectiveness of learning, make it easier for students to understand relationships among vocabulary items, and motivate them to be more active in the learning process.
 - b. For Students, the results of this study are expected to provide direct benefits, namely improving vocabulary mastery in terms of vocabulary quantity, understanding word meanings, correct spelling, and proper pronunciation. In addition, the application of the Semantic Mapping technique can help students remember new vocabulary more easily because it is presented through a logical concept map. By doing so,

students are also expected to become more motivated, confident, and active in participating in English learning.

- c. For Schools, this study is expected to provide valuable input in efforts to improve English learning strategies so that they become more interesting and in accordance with students' needs. The results of the study can be taken into consideration in curriculum development, teacher training, and the utilization of learning media. By applying various techniques such as Semantic Mapping, schools can also improve the quality of English learning so that it has a positive impact on students' academic achievement in general.
- d. For Researchers, this study is expected to provide knowledge and references for other researchers to develop studies related to vocabulary acquisition, especially through the use of the Semantic Mapping technique. In addition, this study can serve as a methodological reference for other researchers who want to conduct similar studies in different contexts, objects, or language skills. This study also serves as evidence of the implementation of knowledge that can improve the professionalism of researchers as prospective educators, as well as enrich study experience useful for scientific development and academic competence.
- e. For STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang, this study is expected to become a source of new information and provide additional insight for students, especially those in the English Education Study Program. The results of this study can also serve as an additional reference for the

campus library so that they can be utilized by students who are preparing scientific papers, including this and other research projects. In addition, this study has the potential to enrich the collection of local studies relevant to the needs of English language learning at the junior high school level, so that the campus can make a real contribution in providing solutions to educational problems in the region.

E. Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is whether the use of semantic mapping can improve students' vocabulary mastery. The hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

1. Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): There is a significant effect of using the Semantic Mapping technique on the vocabulary mastery of Grade VIII students at Joseph Khatulistiwa Junior High School, including quantity, meaning, spelling, and pronunciation.
2. Null Hypothesis (H_o): There is no significant effect of using the Semantic Mapping technique on the vocabulary mastery of Grade VIII students at Joseph Khatulistiwa Junior High School, including quantity, meaning, spelling, and pronunciation.

F. Terminology

In this study there are several key terms. To avoid misunderstanding and ensure clarity, the following are definitions of the terms used:

1. Learning Effect

The learning impact in this study refers to changes in students' vocabulary skills as a result of applying the Semantic Mapping technique in the teaching and learning process. These changes are not observed generally but are measured systematically by comparing students' pre-test and post-test results. The learning impact emphasizes measurable learning outcomes, particularly improvements in students' ability to understand and use English vocabulary. In the context of this study, the learning impact includes improvements in students' ability to recognize vocabulary meanings, write vocabulary with correct spelling, and pronounce words correctly. The learning impact is used as the main indicator to determine the extent to which the application of the Semantic Mapping technique contributes to improving the vocabulary skills of Grade VIII students at Joseph Khatulistiwa Junior High School.

2. Semantic Mapping Technique

The Semantic Mapping application in this study refers to the implementation of vocabulary instruction that organizes words based on semantic relationships through concept maps. The application is carried out systematically during classroom activities by involving students in identifying key vocabulary, grouping words into meaning categories, and connecting related vocabulary items into an integrated conceptual network. In this study, the technique is implemented in teaching narrative texts, particularly fables. Students are guided to construct concept maps based on

specific topics and develop related vocabulary. This application aims to help students understand relationships among words, improve retention, and facilitate vocabulary use in learning contexts. This term emphasizes the instructional aspect of the technique as applied during the treatment stage of the study.

3. Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary mastery is defined as students' ability to manage and use English vocabulary functionally in the learning context. This ability involves not only knowledge of word meanings but also several interrelated aspects, namely understanding word meanings, spelling accuracy, appropriate use of vocabulary in sentence contexts, and pronunciation accuracy. Vocabulary mastery is measured through a vocabulary test designed based on these indicators and administered to students in the form of a pre-test and post-test. The measurement results are used to identify the development of students' vocabulary skills after the application of the Semantic Mapping technique. Thus, vocabulary mastery in this study serves as the main variable representing students' vocabulary skills and forms the basis for analyzing the learning impact of the instructional approach used.