

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the present study. It provides a theoretical foundation for understanding vocabulary learning among EFL young learners and the use of children's short stories in vocabulary instruction. The discussion covers vocabulary learning, young learners, the teaching of English and vocabulary to young learners, children's short stories, and previous studies related to the research. These discussions provide the theoretical basis for examining how children's short stories are implemented in vocabulary teaching, how they support vocabulary learning, and how students perceive their use in the classroom.

2.1 Theoretical Review of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a central concept in this study because it forms an essential part of the language that learners need to understand and use in communication. Before discussing vocabulary learning among EFL young learners, it is necessary to establish a clear understanding of what vocabulary involves. This section therefore reviews the definition, types, and importance of vocabulary, followed by its teaching to young learners. The perspectives discussed in these sections are then synthesized to establish the theoretical basis for understanding vocabulary in the present study.

2.1.1 An overview of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the central concepts examined in the present study. Understanding vocabulary requires attention not only to what vocabulary means,

but also to its different types, its importance in language learning, and the ways it can be taught to young learners. These aspects provide a theoretical basis for understanding vocabulary learning in an EFL context. Therefore, this section reviews the definition and types of vocabulary, its role in language learning, and relevant considerations in teaching vocabulary to young learners.

1. Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is more than a collection of words and their meanings. In language learning, knowing a word involves several dimensions of knowledge that enable learners to recognize, understand, and eventually use it appropriately. Nation (2013) explains vocabulary knowledge through three broad aspects: form, meaning, and use. Form concerns features such as how a word is spoken and written, meaning involves the relationship between a word and the concept it represents, while use concerns how the word functions in language.

This perspective suggests that knowing the meaning of a word alone does not necessarily indicate complete vocabulary knowledge. Learners gradually develop different aspects of word knowledge as they encounter and use vocabulary in various language-learning situations. Schmitt (2010) similarly discusses vocabulary knowledge as a complex area of second-language learning that involves different dimensions of lexical knowledge rather than a simple all-or-nothing ability.

For young foreign-language learners, vocabulary has particular importance because words provide language resources that allow children

to participate in classroom communication and gradually develop their language ability. Cameron (2001) places vocabulary development at the center of foreign-language learning at the primary level and explains that children are capable of learning foreign-language words through their participation in classroom discourse and activities.

Taken together, these perspectives indicate that vocabulary should not be understood simply as the number of words a learner can memorize. Rather, vocabulary knowledge develops as learners become increasingly familiar with the form and meaning of words and learn how those words function in language. In the context of the present study, vocabulary refers to the English words that fifth-grade EFL learners encounter, understand, and use through classroom learning activities. This understanding provides the basis for examining how children's short stories may provide meaningful contexts in which vocabulary is introduced and explored.

2. Types of Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge can be viewed in terms of how learners understand and use words. Nation (2013) distinguishes vocabulary knowledge into receptive and productive dimensions. Receptive vocabulary refers to words that learners can recognize and understand when they encounter them through listening or reading, whereas productive vocabulary involves the ability to retrieve and use words when speaking or writing. These dimensions indicate that understanding a word

and being able to use it independently represent different aspects of vocabulary knowledge.

Receptive vocabulary generally involves recognizing a word when it appears in spoken or written language and connecting it with an appropriate meaning. In classroom learning, for example, students may understand a word when they hear it in a story or see it in a text even though they are not yet able to use the word independently. Nation (2013) explains that receptive knowledge involves recognizing aspects of a word's form, meaning, and use when the word is encountered. This type of knowledge therefore plays an important role in helping learners comprehend language input.

Productive vocabulary, on the other hand, requires learners to retrieve vocabulary and use it to express meaning. This may involve producing a word orally or in written form and using it appropriately in a particular context. Nation (2013) describes productive knowledge as involving the ability to produce the appropriate word form and connect it with its meaning and use. Productive vocabulary therefore requires learners to move beyond recognition toward active language use.

Although receptive and productive vocabulary can be distinguished conceptually, they are closely related in the process of vocabulary development. Learners may initially encounter and understand a word receptively before becoming sufficiently familiar with it to use the word productively. Schmitt (2010) emphasizes that vocabulary knowledge

develops gradually and that knowing a word involves different levels and aspects of knowledge rather than a simple distinction between knowing and not knowing a word. This perspective suggests that vocabulary development can be understood as a continuing process in which learners' knowledge becomes richer through repeated encounters and language use.

In the context of the present study, the distinction between receptive and productive vocabulary provides a useful perspective for understanding students' vocabulary learning through children's short stories. During storytelling activities, learners may first encounter vocabulary receptively as they listen to the story and interpret words through its context. Classroom interaction and follow-up activities may then provide opportunities for them to recall and use some of the vocabulary more actively. Therefore, the present study considers vocabulary learning as a developing process that may involve both understanding words and gradually using them in meaningful classroom contexts.

From this perspective, vocabulary enrichment in the present study can be understood as a gradual process in which learners develop broader familiarity with vocabulary through repeated and meaningful encounters. Children's short stories may contribute to this process by providing contextual opportunities for learners to encounter, understand, pronounce, and practice English words.

2.1.2 The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning

Vocabulary plays an important role in language learning because it enables learners to understand and express meaning across different language skills. Learners rely on vocabulary when interpreting spoken and written language as well as when communicating their own ideas. For this reason, vocabulary development is closely connected to learners' ability to participate in meaningful communication.

Nation (2013) explains that vocabulary knowledge contributes to both receptive and productive language use. Receptively, learners need sufficient vocabulary to understand words encountered in listening and reading. Productively, they need to retrieve and use appropriate words when expressing ideas through speaking and writing. Vocabulary development therefore supports learners across the four language skills rather than functioning as an isolated component of language learning.

Schmitt (2010) similarly emphasizes the central role of lexical knowledge in second-language learning. Vocabulary knowledge develops progressively as learners encounter words in different contexts and become more familiar with their meanings and uses. From this perspective, vocabulary learning involves not only expanding the number of words learners know but also developing richer knowledge that allows those words to be understood and used appropriately.

The importance of vocabulary is particularly relevant to young foreign-language learners. Cameron (2001) explains that vocabulary learning is a significant aspect of foreign-language development in primary school contexts, as children gradually build their language knowledge through words encountered in

classroom activities and discourse. For young learners, meaningful learning experiences can provide opportunities to connect unfamiliar English words with understandable situations and concepts.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that vocabulary provides an important foundation for both language comprehension and language production. Nation (2013) highlights its receptive and productive dimensions, Schmitt (2010) emphasizes the gradual development of lexical knowledge, and Cameron (2001) places vocabulary within the particular context of children's foreign-language learning. In the present study, these perspectives provide a theoretical basis for examining vocabulary learning among fifth-grade EFL learners, particularly how vocabulary is encountered and explored through meaningful classroom activities.

2.1.3 Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners

Teaching vocabulary to young learners requires consideration of both their language-learning needs and their developmental characteristics. Vocabulary instruction for children should not focus solely on introducing new words but should also provide opportunities for learners to understand, encounter, and use vocabulary through activities appropriate to their age and learning context. A recent systematic review by Umme (2024), which examined 27 studies on vocabulary instruction at the primary-school level, highlights the importance of instructional practices that provide learners with appropriate support in developing vocabulary knowledge.

For young EFL learners, vocabulary learning can take place through both intentional and incidental activities. Liu and Reynolds (2025), in their systematic

review of vocabulary-learning activities among primary-school EFL learners, identified a wide range of intentional and incidental activities used to introduce and develop new vocabulary. Their review suggests that vocabulary learning can be strengthened when activities require learners to engage more deeply with new words rather than simply encounter them without further processing.

Another important consideration is learner engagement. Young learners may benefit from vocabulary activities that allow them to interact with language through meaningful and age-appropriate experiences. Fauzi (2022), for example, found that song- and game-based vocabulary activities provided Indonesian primary-school learners with an enjoyable learning experience while supporting their receptive and expressive vocabulary development. These findings suggest that vocabulary instruction for children can incorporate interactive activities that allow learners to encounter and practice words in ways that are accessible and engaging.

Teachers also have an important role in determining how vocabulary is introduced and practiced. Annajmi (2023) found that elementary-level English teachers employed different strategies in teaching vocabulary to young learners, reflecting the need to adapt vocabulary instruction to classroom conditions and learners' characteristics. Rather than relying on a single technique, vocabulary teaching can therefore involve varied forms of support and classroom interaction according to the learning objectives and students' needs.

Taken together, the theoretical perspectives reviewed in this section suggest that vocabulary learning involves more than memorizing individual words. It includes learners' developing knowledge of word meaning and use, as well as their

ability to understand and gradually use vocabulary in meaningful contexts (Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2010). In the context of young EFL learners, recent studies further emphasize the value of age-appropriate activities, meaningful language exposure, and active learner involvement in supporting vocabulary development (Umme, 2024; Liu & Reynolds, 2025). These perspectives provide the theoretical basis for the present study, in which vocabulary learning is viewed as a gradual and contextual process rather than the simple accumulation of isolated words. This understanding also highlights the need for instructional materials that can present vocabulary in meaningful and accessible contexts for young learners, which leads to the discussion of children's short stories in the following section.

2.2 Theoretical Review of Children's Short Stories

Children's short stories constitute the second major concept examined in this study. In EFL instruction, stories can function as instructional materials through which learners encounter language within a narrative context. To establish the theoretical foundation for their use in the present study, this section discusses the definition and characteristics of children's short stories, their benefits in EFL learning, criteria for selecting appropriate stories, and their role in vocabulary learning. The discussion concludes by synthesizing these perspectives in relation to the focus of the present research.

2.2.1 An Overview of Children's Short Stories

Children's short stories constitute another central concept in the present study, as they are examined in relation to vocabulary learning among young EFL learners. A theoretical understanding of children's short stories is necessary to

clarify their nature, characteristics, and pedagogical relevance in the EFL classroom. Accordingly, this section discusses the definition and characteristics of children's short stories, their benefits in EFL learning, criteria for selecting appropriate stories, and their relationship with vocabulary learning.

2.2.2 Definition of Children's Short Stories

Children's short stories can be understood as part of children's literature that presents narratives in a form intended to be accessible and meaningful to young readers or listeners. In language-learning contexts, children's literature offers learners opportunities to encounter language through stories rather than through isolated linguistic items. Children's short stories can also serve as pedagogical resources in English language instruction because their linguistic features provide opportunities for learners to encounter language within connected narrative contexts (Labrador, 2022).

The concept of children's short stories in EFL education is also closely related to the broader use of children's literature as instructional material. Asnita and Marlina (2022), for example, examined English children's literature, particularly short stories, as a resource for vocabulary learning in an EFL context. Their study illustrates how short stories can be incorporated into English instruction as materials through which learners encounter vocabulary within a connected text rather than as separate word lists.

Although children's literature may include various forms and genres, the present study specifically focuses on **short narrative stories** used with young EFL learners. Therefore, children's short stories in this research refer to relatively brief

narrative texts selected for fifth-grade learners and used as instructional materials in vocabulary-learning activities. The stories provide a narrative context in which students can encounter English words through characters, actions, events, and situations presented during classroom instruction.

2.2.3 Characteristics of Children's Short Stories

Children's short stories have particular linguistic and narrative characteristics that distinguish them from texts intended for more mature readers. Since these stories are written for children, their content and language generally need to be accessible to readers whose linguistic and cognitive abilities are still developing. Akidah (2022), in an analysis of children's short stories, identifies **simplicity of content and form** as an important characteristic of children's stories. The study also notes that the language and presentation of children's stories tend to be straightforward so that the events can be understood and imagined by young readers.

From a linguistic perspective, children-oriented stories also display recognizable patterns that can support their use in language-learning contexts. Labrador (2022) explains that children's short stories have particular textual and linguistic characteristics and identifies descriptive modifiers and frequently occurring lexical patterns as relevant features of the genre. Such linguistic features can provide learners with language that is embedded within descriptions of characters, objects, actions, and situations rather than presented as isolated vocabulary items.

Repetition is another feature commonly associated with stories used for young language learners. Children's literature may include repeated language, cumulative content, rhyme, and other recurring patterns that make elements of the story more recognizable as the narrative develops. Illustrations may also accompany the text and provide visual support for understanding characters, objects, and events. These features can make the narrative more accessible while giving learners additional contextual information for interpreting the language presented in the story.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that children's short stories are characterized not simply by their short length, but by the relationship between **accessible content, understandable language, narrative context, recurring linguistic patterns, and supporting elements such as illustrations**. In the context of the present study, these characteristics are relevant because the stories are used with fifth-grade EFL learners who encounter English vocabulary through the characters, actions, and events presented in the narrative.

2.2.4 Benefits of Children's Short Stories in EFL Learning

Children's short stories can offer several pedagogical benefits when they are incorporated into EFL instruction for young learners. One important benefit is their ability to present language within a meaningful narrative context. Instead of encountering language as separate words or structures, learners can experience it through characters, actions, descriptions, and events that form a connected story. Labrador (2022) recognizes stories as a relevant pedagogical resource for teaching

English to young learners and highlights the linguistic potential of children-oriented texts for language instruction.

Stories can also create opportunities for learners to connect new language with their existing knowledge and experiences. Gao et al. (2023), in their study of third-grade EFL learners, found that storytelling approaches generated different patterns of learner responses. Notably, learners who received greater exposure to stories produced more responses connected to their own knowledge and life experiences. This finding suggests that storytelling can encourage learners to engage with narrative content beyond simply recalling information presented by the teacher.

Another potential benefit concerns learners' engagement and motivation. Wibowo et al. (2024) reported that storytelling contributed to a positive learning environment and increased learners' engagement and motivation during English vocabulary learning. Although their participants were junior high school students rather than elementary learners, their findings provide additional evidence that storytelling can encourage active involvement in the language-learning process.

For elementary EFL learners specifically, recent evidence also indicates that story-based instruction can support active participation while learners engage with vocabulary. Brilianti and Sugirin (2024), for example, investigated storytelling supported by puppet pictures among first-grade elementary students and reported significant improvement in vocabulary scores following the intervention. Their study demonstrates the potential of combining storytelling with age-appropriate

visual media, although its pre-experimental design and use of puppet pictures distinguish it from the present study.

Taken together, these studies suggest that children's stories can contribute to EFL learning by providing meaningful language contexts, encouraging connections between language and learners' experiences, and supporting classroom engagement. However, the benefits of story-based instruction may also depend on how stories are presented, the characteristics of the learners, and the instructional activities accompanying them. Therefore, children's short stories should not be assumed to produce the same learning outcomes in every classroom context. In the present study, these perspectives provide a basis for exploring children's short stories as instructional materials for fifth-grade EFL learners without presuming their effectiveness in advance.

2.2.5 Criteria for Selecting Children's Short Stories

Selecting appropriate children's short stories is an important part of story-based instruction because not every story is equally suitable for young EFL learners. Teachers need to consider the relationship between the story, learners' characteristics, and the objectives of the lesson. In particular, the linguistic demands of a story should be manageable enough for learners to follow the narrative while still providing opportunities to encounter new language.

One important consideration is the level of language difficulty. Research on text complexity in English picture books for young EFL learners suggests that vocabulary familiarity, sentence structure, text length, and illustration support are relevant when determining whether a text is appropriate for a particular group of

learners (Zhao et al., 2022). Similarly, Rosemarie et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of matching the readability and difficulty of short stories with learners' reading abilities, since inappropriate text difficulty may interfere with comprehension and learners' interest in reading.

The content and relevance of the story should also be considered. A suitable story should be appropriate to learners' developmental level and sufficiently connected to their experiences or interests to make the narrative understandable and engaging. Recent classroom-based work with young EFL learners likewise emphasizes that storybooks should be selected according to learners' language proficiency and intellectual capacity while remaining aligned with the learning objectives (Yılmaz et al., 2024).

Another consideration is the support provided by illustrations and other contextual features. Visual elements can help learners connect unfamiliar language with characters, objects, actions, and events in the narrative. Research on picture-book complexity indicates that illustration support should be considered alongside vocabulary, sentence structure, story length, and learners' existing knowledge rather than treated as an independent feature (Zhao et al., 2022).

For vocabulary instruction specifically, the linguistic content of the story should also correspond to the learning purpose. A story needs to provide vocabulary that can be explored without making the overall narrative too difficult for learners to understand. Therefore, story selection involves balancing language accessibility, vocabulary opportunities, narrative comprehensibility, learner suitability, and

instructional objectives rather than choosing a story simply because it is short or visually attractive.

Taken together, these considerations suggest that the suitability of children's short stories depends on both the characteristics of the text and the needs of the learners. In the present study, the stories used with fifth-grade EFL learners are considered in relation to their language level, comprehensibility, vocabulary content, narrative context, and suitability for classroom learning. These criteria are particularly important because the stories function not merely as reading materials but as instructional resources through which students encounter English vocabulary.

2.2.6 Children's Short Stories in Vocabulary Learning

Children's short stories can provide a meaningful context for vocabulary learning because words are presented as part of a connected narrative rather than as isolated language items. Through characters, actions, settings, and events, learners can encounter unfamiliar vocabulary in situations that provide contextual clues to meaning. For young EFL learners, this type of exposure may create opportunities to connect new words with understandable events and experiences presented in a story.

Recent studies have examined the contribution of storytelling to vocabulary learning among young EFL learners. Gao et al. (2023), for example, investigated vocabulary acquisition among third-grade EFL learners through three different storytelling approaches: storytelling alone, storytelling combined with word-focused instruction, and storytelling accompanied by related activities. Their

findings showed that vocabulary-learning outcomes differed across the three approaches, suggesting that the way storytelling is implemented can influence how learners engage with and acquire vocabulary.

Story-based vocabulary learning can also be supported by visual and interactive elements. Brilianti and Sugirin (2024) investigated storytelling supported by puppet pictures among first-grade EFL learners and reported improvement in students' vocabulary acquisition following the intervention. Although their study incorporated additional visual media and employed a pre-experimental design, the findings indicate that contextual and visual support accompanying storytelling can provide young learners with opportunities to engage with unfamiliar English words.

In addition to vocabulary outcomes, the learning experience created through storytelling is also relevant. Wibowo et al. (2024) reported that storytelling contributed to learners' engagement and motivation during vocabulary learning. Their findings suggest that story-based instruction may provide a classroom environment in which learners encounter vocabulary while actively participating in the learning process. However, since their participants were junior high school students, the findings should be interpreted carefully when applied to elementary-level EFL learners.

Overall, the literature suggests that children's short stories may support vocabulary learning by providing contextualized language exposure and opportunities for learners to engage with words through meaningful narrative experiences. At the same time, the contribution of storytelling cannot be separated

from how stories are presented, the characteristics of the learners, and the activities accompanying the stories. In the present study, children's short stories are therefore viewed as instructional resources that may support fifth-grade EFL learners in encountering and engaging with English vocabulary rather than as materials that automatically produce vocabulary improvement. Within the present study, this supportive role is understood as a form of vocabulary enrichment. The stories may enrich the vocabulary-learning process by giving learners contextualized and repeated opportunities to encounter, understand, pronounce, and practice unfamiliar English words without assuming measurable improvement in vocabulary achievement.

2.3 Previous Studies

This section reviews several previous studies related to the use of stories and storytelling in vocabulary learning. The studies are examined in terms of their research focus, purposes, methodologies, findings, strengths, and limitations. The review is followed by a discussion of the similarities and differences among the studies and the identification of the research gap addressed by the present study.

2.3.1 Review of Previous Studies

Several previous studies have examined storytelling and story-based instruction in relation to vocabulary learning among young EFL learners. Although these studies share a common interest in the pedagogical use of stories, they differ in terms of participants, instructional media, research design, and the aspects of learning they emphasize. Reviewing these differences is important for identifying the position of the present study within the existing literature.

The first study was conducted by **Maya et al. (2022)** under the title *Digital Storytelling to Support Young Learners' English Vocabulary Development: A Case Study*. The study aimed to investigate young learners' perceptions of digital storytelling during vocabulary learning. It employed a case study involving 23 fifth-grade learners from an elementary school in Tuban, East Java, and collected data through in-depth interviews and closed-ended questionnaires. The findings indicated that the participants generally perceived digital storytelling as engaging, interesting, and motivating for vocabulary development. A strength of the study is its direct attention to fifth-grade learners' perceptions, which provides insight into students' experiences during vocabulary learning. However, its focus on **digital storytelling** means that technological and audiovisual features formed part of the learning experience. In addition, the study concentrated primarily on students' perceptions rather than providing a detailed account of classroom implementation throughout the instructional process.

The second study, conducted by **Gao et al. (2023)**, was entitled *The Effects of Three Different Storytelling Approaches on the Vocabulary Acquisition and Response Patterns of Young EFL Students*. The study compared three approaches: storytelling alone, storytelling with word-focused instruction, and storytelling accompanied by related activities. The researchers conducted a three-week pilot study and a nine-week main study with third-grade EFL learners. Both phases employed a pretest–posttest design with a delayed test, and classroom video recordings were used to analyze students' response patterns. The results showed that storytelling alone produced the strongest overall performance, while gains

associated with word-focused instruction or follow-up activities were less sustained over time. A major strength of this study is its comparison of several storytelling approaches and its inclusion of delayed testing and classroom-response data. However, its emphasis is mainly on comparing vocabulary outcomes across instructional conditions, which provides less in-depth information about students' perceptions and lived classroom experiences.

The third study was carried out by **Wibowo et al. (2024)** in a study entitled *Exploring the Use of Storytelling Technique to Enhance English Vocabulary for Young Learners*. The research explored the potential of storytelling to support English vocabulary acquisition among young learners and examined learners' engagement and motivation during the process. The study employed qualitative data collection and involved eighth-grade junior high school students. Its findings suggested that storytelling contributed to a positive learning environment and supported learners' engagement, motivation, and vocabulary learning. One strength of the study is its attention to affective and classroom-experience aspects in addition to vocabulary development. Nevertheless, the participants were junior high school students rather than elementary learners, making the developmental context different from that of the present study. The available report also provides relatively limited detail about the classroom implementation process compared with studies that rely on sustained observation.

The fourth study was conducted by **Brilianti and Sugirin (2024)** under the title *Boosting Young EFL Learners' English Vocabulary Acquisition by Utilizing Puppet Pictures as Storytelling Media*. The study aimed to investigate whether

puppet pictures used as storytelling media could improve young learners' vocabulary acquisition. It employed a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design involving first-grade students at Ariya Metta Elementary School. The instruments consisted of a vocabulary pretest and posttest based on Phase A of the Merdeka Curriculum. The students' mean score increased from 57.86 on the pretest to 88.57 on the posttest, and the paired-samples test showed a statistically significant difference. A strength of the study is that it provides measurable evidence of vocabulary change among elementary-level EFL learners. However, because the study used only one group without a comparison group, the improvement cannot be attributed with complete certainty to the intervention alone. Moreover, the use of puppet pictures means that the results reflect storytelling combined with additional visual media rather than children's short stories as the primary instructional material.

The fifth study was conducted by **Dumiat et al. (2025)** in *Telling Stories to Young Learners: The Teachers' Beliefs and Practices*. The study aimed to explore teachers' beliefs about storytelling and how they implemented storytelling in teaching young learners. An explanatory sequential mixed-method design was used with 105 participants, and the research combined questionnaire data with follow-up interviews. The findings indicated that teachers generally believed storytelling could support vocabulary, pronunciation, imagination, curiosity, communication skills, and cultural understanding. Teachers also reported using several storytelling forms, including face-to-face storytelling, read-aloud activities, digital storytelling, online storytelling, and interactive videos. A strength of the study is its combination

of quantitative and qualitative evidence and its attention to teachers' actual practices. However, the study focuses primarily on teachers' beliefs and reported practices rather than directly examining students' vocabulary-learning experiences. Its participants also included both early-childhood and elementary-school teachers, making the context broader than the specific fifth-grade setting of the present study.

Taken together, the five studies show that storytelling has been examined from several perspectives, including vocabulary acquisition, learners' perceptions and engagement, different storytelling approaches, additional instructional media, and teachers' beliefs and practices. However, the reviewed studies differ substantially in their instructional media, participants, and methodological focus. Some studies employed digital storytelling or puppet-based media, while others concentrated on measurable vocabulary outcomes or teachers' perspectives. Limited attention has been given to a qualitative study that simultaneously examines children's short stories as the primary instructional material, their classroom implementation, their role in supporting vocabulary learning, and fifth-grade EFL learners' perceptions within the same elementary-school context. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by exploring the use of children's short stories in fifth-grade EFL vocabulary instruction through a qualitative case study.

2.3.2 Discussion of Previous Studies

Having reviewed the five related studies, it is important to consider their similarities and differences in relation to the present study. In general, the previous studies indicate a shared interest in the use of stories or storytelling as resources for

supporting vocabulary learning in EFL contexts. Maya et al. (2022) and Gao et al. (2023), for instance, both investigated story-based learning among young learners, although they approached the topic differently. Maya et al. (2022) focused on learners' perceptions of digital storytelling, whereas Gao et al. (2023) compared different storytelling approaches and examined their effects on vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Brilianti and Sugirin (2024) investigated vocabulary learning through storytelling but incorporated puppet pictures as additional instructional media. These studies suggest that stories have been employed in various forms to facilitate learners' encounters with English vocabulary.

Differences can also be observed in the participants and research contexts. Maya et al. (2022) involved fifth-grade elementary learners, which is particularly relevant to the context of the present study, while Gao et al. (2023) worked with third-grade learners and Brilianti and Sugirin (2024) involved first-grade elementary students. In contrast, Wibowo et al. (2024) examined junior high school students, while Dumiat et al. (2025) approached storytelling from the perspective of teachers rather than focusing directly on learners. These variations demonstrate that story-based vocabulary learning has been explored across different educational levels and perspectives. Nevertheless, studies focusing specifically on fifth-grade EFL learners remain relatively limited among the studies reviewed here.

Methodologically, the previous studies also represent different research orientations. Some focused on measurable vocabulary outcomes through pretest–posttest procedures, while others investigated learners' perceptions, engagement, or teachers' beliefs and practices. Consequently, the existing studies provide

valuable evidence concerning both learning outcomes and perceptions of storytelling. However, the reviewed literature tends to examine these dimensions separately. Relatively little attention has been given to understanding how children's short stories are actually implemented in vocabulary instruction while simultaneously examining their role in the learning process and learners' perceptions of their use. This distinction is particularly relevant to the present study, which adopts a qualitative orientation and seeks to understand the phenomenon within its classroom context rather than primarily measuring vocabulary gains.

2.3.3 Research Gap

Based on the discussion of the previous studies, several aspects remain insufficiently explored in the existing research. Previous studies have examined storytelling in relation to vocabulary learning through various approaches, including digital storytelling, additional visual media, vocabulary-focused interventions, and learners' or teachers' perspectives. However, limited attention has been given to the use of children's short stories as the primary instructional material for teaching vocabulary to fifth-grade EFL young learners, particularly within a qualitative classroom context. Furthermore, previous research has tended to focus on particular aspects of storytelling, such as vocabulary outcomes, learners' perceptions, or teachers' practices, rather than examining the classroom use of children's short stories and the learning experiences surrounding their implementation within the same study.

To address this gap, the present study explores the use of children's short stories in teaching vocabulary to fifth-grade EFL young learners. Rather than

primarily measuring vocabulary gains, the study seeks to obtain an in-depth understanding of how children's short stories are implemented in vocabulary instruction, how they support vocabulary learning during classroom activities, and how students perceive their use. In this way, the present study is expected to provide context-specific qualitative insights into the pedagogical use of children's short stories in an elementary EFL classroom. Through these three areas, the study seeks to understand vocabulary enrichment as a contextual learning process rather than as a quantitatively measured outcome.