

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Game-based learning (GBL) is an innovative educational approach that incorporates games into the learning process, allowing students to acquire new knowledge and skills engagingly and interactively. According to Li (2021), Game-based learning is a learning method that applies the game in it. Over recent years, technological advancements have played a crucial role in revolutionizing traditional learning methods, providing more efficient and interactive tools to aid in the educational process. These innovations have benefited language learning by offering students more engaging ways to acquire and retain new vocabulary. GBL not only provides a dynamic environment for learning, but it also enhances students' cognitive, social, and emotional development, making it a valuable tool in early education.

In the context of Indonesia, English proficiency remains a significant challenge. Iriance (2021) reports that Indonesia is one of three countries whose English skills are poor, which highlights the need for innovative solutions to enhance English language education in the country. Learning English, particularly vocabulary acquisition, is often hindered by a lack of enthusiasm, motivation, and interest among students. Traditional teaching methods, such as rote memorization and lecture-based instruction, fail to engage students and can result in a lack of long-term retention. This situation has

created a growing need for alternative teaching methods that can stimulate student interest, encourage active participation, and make learning enjoyable. Game-based learning (GBL) offers a promising solution by integrating play and learning, which can increase students' motivation and make learning English an enjoyable experience.

The role of the teacher in implementing effective learning models cannot be underestimated. According to Wijayanti et al (2017), Teachers can choose the learning model that will be used to support the teaching activities in the classroom so that they can be managed effectively. Teachers need to select teaching models and tools that are effective in delivering content and engaging for students. Maintaining focus and attention can be challenging for younger students, especially those in elementary school. Research has shown that young learners often struggle with long, monotonous lessons, and their attention spans are limited (Schmitt, 2012). To address this challenge, GBL provides a student-centered learning approach that fosters active participation. Games are inherently engaging and often appeal to students' natural curiosity and desire to explore, making them ideal tools for keeping students interested and focused during lessons.

At a young age, children's cognitive abilities are highly adaptable, and this stage of development offers a unique opportunity for language learning. Copland (2014) emphasizes the benefits of introducing English early, noting that learning English from the beginning is advantageous as young learners are more adaptable. This adaptability allows children to absorb language naturally through immersive and interactive activities. GBL leverages this developmental stage by offering students a fun, low-

stress environment where they can practice and expand their vocabulary. Research by Frossard et al (2012) further supports this approach, noting that learning by playing also supports a creative learning process where there is a boost of humor and questions. These elements are not only enjoyable but also foster a deeper understanding of vocabulary as students engage with it in a context that is both meaningful and memorable.

The importance of vocabulary acquisition in language learning cannot be overstated. According to Oktafiani and Fauzan (2017), learning English from an early age offers multiple advantages, such as making language acquisition easier, providing more career opportunities, and yielding social and economic benefits. Vocabulary forms the foundation of language proficiency; without a strong vocabulary base, students will struggle to comprehend reading materials, participate in conversations, and express themselves effectively. Piaget and Vygotsky's cognitive theories support the idea that play is essential in children's cognitive development. They argue that children's cognitive growth is facilitated by engaging in activities that involve imitation, memory, understanding, and imagination. These developmental phases are naturally supported by GBL, which encourages students to practice and apply vocabulary through play.

However, there remains a significant gap in the research regarding applying GBL specifically to vocabulary acquisition in elementary school students. While there is considerable research on game-based learning in higher education and with older students, fewer studies have focused on its application with young learners in primary

schools. Most research tends to generalize the effectiveness of game-based learning across various age groups, without adequately addressing the unique needs and developmental stages of younger students. This lack of targeted research suggests a need for more focused studies that investigate the impact of GBL on vocabulary acquisition in elementary education, particularly in non-English-speaking countries such as Indonesia. By focusing on younger age groups, this research can provide valuable insights into how games can be used to enhance vocabulary learning in primary school students, allowing educators to better tailor their teaching methods to the specific needs of their students.

The urgency of this research is underscored by the persistent challenges faced in language education, particularly in terms of vocabulary acquisition. Many elementary school students still struggle with mastering basic English vocabulary. The conventional approach to teaching English vocabulary, which often relies on repetitive drills and memorization, fails to capture students' attention and does not facilitate long-term retention. As a result, students tend to become disengaged and show little interest in learning. This lack of engagement can lead to passive learning, where students may be physically present but mentally disengaged from the lesson. Such disengagement can have long-term negative effects on students' language skills, particularly their ability to express themselves fluently in English.

In the elementary school where this research will be conducted, several factors contribute to students' struggles with vocabulary acquisition. Classroom observations indicate that many students find vocabulary lessons boring and difficult to retain. This

problem is exacerbated by the limited use of innovative teaching methods that could make the lessons more interactive and enjoyable. GBL offers a solution by transforming vocabulary lessons into engaging, interactive experiences that encourage students to practice and apply new words in a fun and stress-free environment. By incorporating word games and other educational games into the curriculum, teachers can create a more dynamic and motivating classroom atmosphere that helps students develop a more robust vocabulary.

The purpose of this research is to assess the effectiveness of GBL in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among elementary school students. By focusing on word games as a method of vocabulary instruction, this study seeks to determine whether game-based learning can improve students' engagement, increase their vocabulary retention, and provide a more enjoyable and effective learning experience. Through this research, educators will be able to better understand the potential of game-based learning as an innovative tool for vocabulary acquisition, offering a new pathway for improving language education in elementary schools.

1.2 Research Problems

The development of vocabulary is essential because elementary school students often have difficulty acquiring new vocabulary. Conventional learning methods may make children feel bored, so this research aims to address this issue by:

1. How does the implementation of Game-Based learning to optimize students' vocabulary Acquisition?
2. What are the students perception about GBL in the classroom?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To know the implementation of GBL to optimize students' vocabulary acquisition.
2. To identify students perception about GBL in the classroom.

1.4 Research Significance

1. Theoretical Significance

Hopefully, this research can contribute to the learning and teaching process in the classroom. Learning by playing word games will have advantages for learning English, as they are used to add new vocabulary. Therefore, by introducing this game, it is hoped that children will enjoy learning English and add new vocabulary to apply in real life. This GBL will not make students feel bored in class because games will make them happier and more active when learning. They will also participate in learning activities.

2. Practical Significance

It is hoped that the results of this research will benefit teachers, students, and researchers in the future. This research can be used as a reference for teachers to create a more exciting and creative way of learning English. For students, this can show their ability, creativity, and confidence in their English language skills. Furthermore, this research can be used as a reference and provide additional information to future researchers conducting the same research. This research will show the points that are important to the reader.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This research focuses on elementary school students and the enhancement of vocabulary. It refers to various approaches such as digital and non-digital games. According to their needs, researchers will take respondents/subjects with an age limit of 7 years and above. This research aims to determine how many elementary school children can improve their vocabulary through games (word games). Researchers will also limit students in elementary school, especially fourth/fifth grade. This class can be recognized for their abilities when they can accept material that is one level more difficult.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Vocabulary:

Vocabulary is knowledge about the meaning of words, meaning knowing one way to understand the meaning of a sentence or paragraph. This vocabulary is essential because it affects four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Vocabulary is a key part of language learning and is essential for effective communication. Learning new vocabulary makes it easier for students to recognize and use words in English.

Game-based learning:

Designed to match learning and theoretical content through game-based learning in the classroom. This learning is used to explore strict learning environments and concepts and targeted learning outcomes. This method aims to test the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching English to increase interactive learning in the classroom. From this application, it can improve students' ability in English.

Teaching media:

The learning media has information aimed at the students in it who have knowledge of attitudes and skills that can be used in behavior to cause consequences of the learning process which can be observed and measured. Physical forms that convey messages and can stimulate students to learn. Teaching media in English usually uses diagrams, photos, audio, video, games, PPT, and many more.