

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

An overview of the research is provided in this chapter. It explains the methods and motivations behind the research. The following describes the research's specifics: Background of the study, research question, objective of the study, hypothesis, scope and limitation of the study, significance of the study, and definitions of the key terms.

A. Background of the Study

In today's dynamic and ever-evolving educational landscape, one of the primary responsibilities of educators is to foster a learning environment that is not only supportive but also intellectually and emotionally stimulating (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2014). This challenge is particularly evident in the context of English language instruction at vocational schools, where students often perceive English as irrelevant to their future careers (Suryanto, 2014). At SMKN 2 Kota Kediri, preliminary observations and informal interviews with English teachers revealed that many students exhibit low motivation and limited confidence in learning English vocabulary. As a result, their vocabulary mastery remains underdeveloped, hindering their ability to comprehend texts and express themselves effectively in both academic and professional contexts (Gardner, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Traditional teaching methods, often characterized by one-way instruction, repetition, and memorization, are still widely used in many vocational classrooms. These teacher-centered approaches tend to neglect students' individual learning needs and fail to create an active, student-centered learning environment. Research shows that such conventional instruction may hinder students' active engagement, intrinsic motivation, and self-directed learning (Brophy, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Consequently, students become passive recipients of knowledge, which leads to disengagement, low vocabulary retention, and minimal improvement in language skills. Therefore, more research is needed to determine how to improve students' learning outcomes and increase their confidence in the educational process. Innovative strategies that foster learner autonomy, meaningful interaction, and engaging materials are crucial in addressing these challenges (Dörnyei, 2001; Schunk et al., 2014).

One promising approach that has emerged is the use of educational games, which are known to provide engaging, interactive, and meaningful learning experiences by tapping into learners' natural desire to play. These games promote critical thinking, collaboration, communication skills, and intrinsic motivation elements that are often overlooked in conventional classrooms (Prensky, 2001). Research supports the notion that educational games significantly enhance students' learning outcomes, attention spans, and willingness to participate (Laine & Lindberg, 2020; Patmanthara et al., 2019). When applied in language learning, games help students process vocabulary through repeated use in meaningful contexts, thereby improving retention and application.

Among the various types of educational games, language board games have gained popularity for their simplicity and effectiveness in language instruction. One such example is “Word Cham”, a board game designed to improve vocabulary mastery through fun, interactive, and collaborative activities. Word Cham allows students to use English vocabulary in meaningful and competitive contexts, thereby promoting communicative competence and active learning (Stebbins, 2001). Research suggests that such games enhance student enthusiasm and participation, making English learning more exciting and memorable (Frasca, 2001; Nickell & Cimpian, 2008). They

also develop various aspects of language proficiency, including vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and comprehension (Levy & Stockwell, 2006).

Another game commonly used in classroom instruction is XO Game, which is relatively more structured and cognitively oriented. Unlike Word Cham, which focuses more on social interaction and vocabulary application, XO Game tends to encourage pattern recognition and memory retrieval. While both games offer educational value, Word Cham is believed to provide more meaningful interaction and practical language use, thereby potentially having a greater influence on students' motivation and vocabulary retention.

Motivation, as a key factor in second language acquisition, can be understood in terms of its levels and types. According to Gardner (1985) and Dörnyei (2001), motivation includes integrative orientation (the desire to connect with the target language culture), instrumental orientation (motivation driven by tangible outcomes like job opportunities), attitudes toward the language community, desire to learn, and motivational intensity (how much effort students exert). Furthermore, based on the Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (1985), motivation exists on a continuum from intrinsic to extrinsic motivation. Students with higher levels of motivation are more likely to focus, persevere, and participate actively in learning. They tend to take initiative, engage in self-directed learning, and overcome language-learning challenges. In contrast, students with lower motivation often exhibit disinterest, avoidance behavior, and low classroom involvement. These differences are influenced by various internal and external factors, including learning environment and instructional method.

Games such as Word Cham and XO Game can help fulfill the three core psychological needs outlined in Self-Determination Theory autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thus enhancing students' intrinsic motivation. By incorporating fun, challenge, and collaboration, these games provide a low-stress and high-engagement alternative to conventional instruction, especially in vocabulary learning, which requires repeated exposure and usage to be effective.

Although many studies have confirmed the benefits of educational games for language learning, most existing research tends to focus on individual games or general engagement outcomes. There is still a lack of comparative studies that examine how different types of games interact with students' motivation levels to affect their vocabulary mastery. Moreover, limited attention has been given to vocational school settings, where students often have lower English proficiency and face unique challenges in learning a foreign language.

To address these challenges and research gaps, the present study aims to investigate the combined effects of Word Cham and XO Game across students' motivation levels on their English vocabulary mastery. This study employs a factorial design, an experimental method that allows researchers to examine both the main effects of each independent variable and the interaction effects among them simultaneously. By doing so, this study will not only compare the effects of Word Cham and XO Game on students' vocabulary mastery but also explore how these effects are influenced by different levels of student motivation. The results are expected to provide both theoretical insights and practical implications, especially for educators in vocational school settings who seek more engaging and effective strategies to improve students' English learning outcomes.

In line with this objective, the title of this study is: “The Effects of Word Cham and XO Game across Students’ Motivation Levels on English Vocabulary Mastery at SMKN 2 Kota Kediri.”

B. Research Question

Based on the background of the study, researcher formulated a problem into:

1. Is there any significant difference in students’ English vocabulary mastery between those who are taught by using Word Cham and by using XO Game at SMKN 2 Kota Kediri?
2. Is there any significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students with high motivation who are taught by using Word Cham and by using XO Game?
3. Is there any significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students with low motivation who are taught by using Word Cham and by using XO Game?
4. Is there any significant interaction between students who are taught by using Word Cham and by using XO Game and their motivation levels on their English vocabulary mastery?

C. Objective of the Study

The objective of the research is listed below:

1. To determine whether there is a significant difference in students’ English vocabulary mastery between those who are taught using Word Cham and those who are taught using XO Game at SMKN 2 Kota Kediri.
2. To find out whether there is a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students with high motivation who are taught using Word Cham and those who are taught using XO Game.

3. To investigate whether there is a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students with low motivation who are taught using Word Cham and those who are taught using XO Game.
4. To examine whether there is a significant interaction between students who are taught by using Word Cham and by using XO Game and their students' motivation levels on their English vocabulary mastery.

D. Hypotheses of The Study

The hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

1. **H₀₁**: There is no significant difference in students' English vocabulary mastery between those who are taught using Word Cham and those who are taught using XO Game.

H₁₁: There is a significant difference in students' English vocabulary mastery between those who are taught using Word Cham and those who are taught using XO Game.
2. **H₀₂**: There is no significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students with high motivation who are taught using Word Cham and those who are taught using XO Game.

H₁₂: There is a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students with high motivation who are taught using Word Cham and those who are taught using XO Game.
3. **H₀₃**: There is no significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students with low motivation who are taught using Word Cham and those who are taught using XO Game.

H₁₃: There is a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students with low motivation who are taught using Word Cham and those who are taught using XO Game.

4. **H₀₄:** There is no significant interaction between students who are taught by using Word Cham and by using XO Game and their motivation levels on their English vocabulary mastery.

H₁₄: There is a significant interaction between students who are taught by using Word Cham and by using XO Game and their motivation levels on their English vocabulary mastery.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Study

a. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the effectiveness of language board games, particularly Word Cham and XO Game in improving English vocabulary mastery among vocational school students. The scope of this research includes comparing the effectiveness of both games while taking into account students' motivation levels, which are classified into two categories: high motivation and low motivation. This study aims to investigate how the type of game used influences vocabulary mastery and how this effect may vary depending on students' motivational levels. Motivation, in this context, serves as a moderating variable that may influence the outcome of the instructional strategies applied. Both vocabulary mastery and motivation levels are measured using valid and reliable instruments within a classroom-based English learning context. The study focuses specifically on vocabulary related to procedure texts, taught during the treatment period, and delivered through interactive learning involving board game activities.

b. Limitation of the Study

This study, however, is not without limitations. First, it is limited to the use of only two types of language board games, Word Cham and XO Game which means the results may not be generalizable to all educational games or instructional methods. Second, the research is conducted solely within a vocational high school context (SMKN 2 Kota Kediri), so findings may not fully represent general secondary or academic high schools. Third, students' motivation is categorized into high and low based on questionnaire scores, which may not capture the full spectrum or complexity of motivational constructs such as integrative, instrumental, or intrinsic types. Fourth, the vocabulary mastery measured in this study may be restricted to the vocabulary specifically trained and reinforced through the game activities, and not necessarily general vocabulary ability. Fifth, the relatively short treatment period may limit the ability to observe long-term retention or transfer of learning. Sixth, external factors such as classroom atmosphere, teacher interaction style, peer influence, and individual learner differences (e.g., prior knowledge, learning style) are not the focus of this study and thus may affect the outcomes in ways that are not fully controlled. Lastly, because the study involves a limited sample in a specific location and time frame, generalizing the results to broader populations or settings should be done cautiously.

F. Significance of the Study

Although educational games have been widely studied in language learning research, their implementation in vocational school settings, especially in relation to students' varying levels of motivation remains underexplored. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating the effects of two language board games, Word Cham and XO Game, on the English vocabulary mastery of vocational students with different motivational

levels. This research holds significant value both theoretically and practically. From a theoretical perspective, it adds to the existing body of knowledge by integrating instructional strategy variables (i.e., game types) with psychological learner factors (i.e., motivation levels) through a factorial design. This interactional approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how pedagogical tools work under different learner conditions.

Practically, this study is expected to contribute to improvements in English teaching practices in vocational schools. Students in vocational education often prioritize practical skills over academic subjects, which can lead to lower motivation toward learning English. By incorporating language board games, teachers can introduce vocabulary learning in a more dynamic, enjoyable, and contextually relevant way. The study may reveal how games like Word Cham and XO Game can increase students' engagement, especially when their motivation levels are taken into account. Since conventional vocabulary learning techniques can be monotonous and ineffective for many vocational students, this research highlights alternative methods that can spark curiosity and sustain attention, potentially improving learning outcomes. Moreover, vocabulary is a crucial component in supporting communication skills and workplace readiness, making its mastery essential for vocational students preparing for globalized employment contexts.

This study may also assist educators in choosing more suitable game-based learning tools depending on the motivation profiles of their students. By comparing Word Cham and XO Game, this research offers insights into which type of game may yield better results for different learner groups, thus providing guidance for more personalized and adaptive classroom instruction. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of

recognizing student motivation as a key factor in instructional planning, thereby supporting more inclusive and learner-centered approaches. Ultimately, this study could help improve the quality of English language instruction in vocational schools and promote lifelong language learning habits among students who may otherwise feel disconnected from traditional academic methods. Furthermore, the findings may contribute to the development of more targeted teaching materials and strategies that respond directly to students' needs, interests, and psychological readiness, fostering a more engaging and effective learning experience.

G. Definition of the Key Terms

It's crucial to understand the definition of key terminology in order to avoid giving the wrong impression. The following terms need to be defined in relation to the subject that may be covered in the study:

- 1. Game-Based Learning and Language Board Games:** Game-based learning is a teaching approach that uses game elements to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. One form of this approach is language board games, which help develop language skills through fun activities like vocabulary building and grammar practice. In this study, two board games are used: Word Cham, which requires students to quickly use vocabulary in sentences, and XO Game, where student's complete language tasks to win squares on a game board.
- 2. Word Cham:** Word Cham is a fast-paced board game that requires students to listen carefully to directional prompts and respond quickly by using the given vocabulary word in a correct sentence. It aims to train both vocabulary recall and sentence construction in a fun, competitive format.

- 3. XO Game:** XO Game adapts the traditional Tic-Tac-Toe structure for language learning. Players can only claim a square by successfully answering a vocabulary or grammar question. This game promotes strategic thinking, peer interaction, and content reinforcement through engaging play.
- 4. English Vocabulary Mastery:** English vocabulary mastery refers to students' comprehensive understanding of English words, including their meanings, forms, and appropriate usage in different contexts. It is essential for developing communication skills and overall language proficiency.
- 5. Student Motivation Levels:** Student motivation encompasses the internal and external factors that influence learners' willingness to engage in the learning process. High motivation is marked by enthusiasm, effort, and persistence, often driven by personal interest or long-term goals. In contrast, low motivation reflects a lack of interest or drive, which may result in minimal participation and lower academic achievement.