

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the introduction of the research. There are a background of the study, research question, objective of the study, hypothesis, scope and limitations of the study, significance of the study and definition of the key terms.

A. Background of the study

Vocabulary simply refers to the words a person knows in a language. Thus, vocabulary plays a very important role in both language learning and communication. Vocabulary is divided into two types, namely: receptive vocabulary, which includes words that are understood through reading and listening, and productive vocabulary, which includes words used in speaking and writing (Nation, 2001). Vocabulary is essential for effective communication; without vocabulary, learners will have difficulty expressing ideas and understanding others, which negatively impacts their overall language skills (Schmitt, 2020). A significant challenge in teaching vocabulary is retention, as learners often forget words that are taught in isolation or disconnected from real-life situations, which reduces motivation (Thornbury, 2006). In short, vocabulary has an important role for communication, but remembering vocabulary is still a challenge.

In this regard, vocabulary teaching is essential for English as a foreign language education, helping students learn, remember, and understand words (Pan, 2011). While Panjaitan et al. (2021) outlined that teachers' readiness to teach in a distance environment was carried out using textbooks, videos, and games,

students were widely and actively involved in assessments, multiple-choice tests, essay writing, and playing games. Practice with synonyms and word discovery maintained interest. Vocabulary itself was developed through watching, listening, and writing down unknown words. However, problems persist; students may struggle with words that are useful but not understood or, on the other hand, understood but not relevant to their daily lives (Mayasari et al., 2019). Ultimately, vocabulary teaching is key in foreign language education, using strategies such as word combinations and cultural context. Challenges remain with words that are misunderstood or irrelevant to everyday life.

In this regard, Media-based approaches, have been shown to be an effective technique for increasing the uptake of vocabulary instruction. Interactive digital games, such as vocabulary learning apps and spelling bee games, for example, allow students to practice new words in an individualized and engaging environment, which is self-energizing and increases retention (Muñoz et al., 2021 as cited in Fageeh, 2013). These games provide immediate feedback and adaptive learning paths, allowing students to learn at their own pace (Rasul et al., 2011). Other researchers have noted that competitive games, even on digital platforms, help foster collaboration and deeper understanding, thereby encouraging engagement in vocabulary through fun and challenging activities, such as spelling bees (Pratama & Hadi, 2023). Together, these media-supported strategies provide the immediate feedback, individual pacing, and interactive experiences needed to strengthen vocabulary retention, making vocabulary learning both effective and enjoyable.

In addition, media such as digital platforms will add variety to lessons and

help retain information, as mentioned by Yunus et al. (2013). In teaching vocabulary, media can be divided into two types such as traditional and modern which is technology integrated. Traditional tools such as books and note cards introduce basic concepts, while modern media, such as videos, applications, and interactive games, create dynamic learning experiences (Reeves, 1998). While media integrated with technology such as mobile apps allow students to practice vocabulary in a personalized way, supporting self-directed learning (Azar, 2014). By combining traditional methods with modern tools, educators can cater to different learning styles, making vocabulary teaching more effective (Mayer, 2014). This integrated approach not only improves retention but also provides practical applications of vocabulary in real-world contexts (Bates, 2019). In short, using traditional tools such as books, and modern media such as game applications, helps improve vocabulary learning by reaching different learning styles and improving retention. Meanwhile, technology-based media allows for personalized practice, making vocabulary teaching more effective.

Moreover, Spelling Bee games enhance students' vocabulary retention, improve pronunciation accuracy, and boost motivation for learning English (Sari, 2017). Students participating in Spelling Bee games often show a more positive attitude during the learning process (Wedhanti et al., 2021). The Word Club Spelling Bee app, created by the Scripps National Spelling Bee, provides an interactive way to practice spelling and vocabulary. The application also has customized word lists, pronunciation, and real-time tracking, which make the process of learning vocabulary fun and efficient. Its easy-to-work-with interface lets students identify areas where they need to spend more time. Students take

quizzes, type spellings correctly, and then listen to the pronunciation for instant feedback that reinforce retention and spelling accuracy. Generally speaking, this kind of Spelling Bee game, such as Word Club, is a very interactive method to improve one's vocabulary and pronunciation, quite contributive, in fact, to language learning.

To find the gap in existing research on the effectiveness of games in vocabulary instruction, several studies have investigated the impact of the Spelling Bee game on students' vocabulary mastery. The first study, conducted by Saiya et al., (2022), aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the Spelling Bee game in enriching students' vocabulary. The study was carried out at SMK Negeri 2 Tondano, focusing on 10th-grade tourism department students. The research utilized a pre-experimental design with one group pre-test and post-test design, showing that the post-test scores were significantly higher than the pre-test scores, indicating the effectiveness of using the Spelling Bee game in teaching vocabulary.

The second study, by Mayasari, (2018), explored the use of the Spelling Bee game to increase students' vocabulary mastery in the seventh grade at SMPN I Bantan. The research used simple random sampling to select students for the controlled and experimental classes. The post-test results of the experimental class were 83, while the controlled class scored 67.5, demonstrating the positive impact of using the Spelling Bee game on students' vocabulary mastery.

The third study, conducted by Mayasari, (2019), focused on the influence of Spelling Bee games on improving students' vocabulary mastery in using ICD-10 Chapter XVIII and XXI at APIKes IRIS Padang. The research highlighted the

importance of introducing vocabulary in an engaging way and emphasized the significance of using games like Spelling Bee to enhance vocabulary learning. The study found that the Spelling Bee game positively impacted students' vocabulary mastery, with post-test scores ranging from 30.00 to 95.00.

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of Spelling Bee games in traditional classroom settings. However, there is a limited understanding of how digital platforms, such as mobile applications, can enhance vocabulary learning. No existing study has explored the impact of the 'Word Club' Spelling Bee game application on vocabulary mastery among young learners, specifically 7th-grade students. This research aims to address this gap by investigating the effectiveness of the 'Word Club' app in improving vocabulary skills. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on digital devices not only as a method for vocabulary acquisition but also as a medium to encourage self-directed learning, allowing students to engage in vocabulary practice independently at their own pace while tracking their progress through app-based feedback.

The purpose of this research is to find out whether using spelling bee game application has a significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery, which has never been done by previous research. The study was entitled **the effectiveness of using “word club” Spelling Bee game application to improve students’ vocabulary mastery for 7th graders.**

B. Research question

Is “Word Club” Spelling Bee game application effective to enhance the vocabulary mastery of the 7th-grade students?

C. Objective of the study

Based on the statement of the research question above, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the 'Word Club' Spelling Bee game application in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery.

D. Hypothesis

The hypotheses of this research are:

H0: There is no significant difference in the vocabulary mastery between 7th-grade students who use the 'Word Club' Spelling Bee game application and those who use the traditional game.

H1: There is significant difference in the vocabulary mastery between 7th-grade students who use the 'Word Club' Spelling Bee game application and those who use the traditional game.

E. Scope and Limitation of the study

This study focused on the effectiveness of the “Word Club” Spelling Bee game application in improving vocabulary skills among 7th-grade students. It specifically examined how the use of this app helped students learn and retain vocabulary better compared to traditional Spelling Bee methods. The research was conducted in one school, which meant that the results might not represent other schools, grade levels, or educational contexts. Furthermore, the study only investigated vocabulary mastery and did not cover other language skills such as grammar, speaking, or listening. Another limitation was that the “Word Club” app did not allow for vocabulary customization, the word lists were predetermined by the developers. In addition, the types of questions or game formats could not be modified by the teacher or researcher, which limited the

flexibility to adapt the content to students' specific needs. These factors might have affected the generalizability of the findings.

F. Significance of the study

This study is important because it shows how using the "Word Club" Spelling Bee game app can help students improve their vocabulary. For teachers, the findings can offer new ways to teach vocabulary in a fun and engaging manner, using digital tools to motivate students. It could inspire teachers to use more interactive methods in their lessons, leading to better learning outcomes. For students, the study is beneficial because it shows how using an app can make learning new words easier and more enjoyable. It helps students practice vocabulary independently, which can boost their confidence in using English. The study can also serve as a foundation for future research on using technology in language learning, especially for improving vocabulary skills. Overall, it highlights the potential of combining traditional and modern teaching methods for more effective learning.

G. Definition of the key terms

The definition of key terms is important to take delivery of to keep away from the false impression. Relating to the topic that might be mentioned in the study, some terms need to be defined as follows:

Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary refers to a collection of words utilized in constructing sentences for effective communication and idea expression. Vocabulary mastery involves not only the ability to easily memorize and comprehend the meanings of words but also the skills to spell the vocabulary correctly and recognize the

vocabulary in context.

Teaching vocabulary

Teaching vocabulary refers to the process of helping learners acquire, understand, and effectively use words in a language. It involves various instructional strategies designed to improve learners' ability to recall, comprehend, and apply vocabulary in both spoken and written communication. This process plays a crucial role in language mastery, as a robust vocabulary is essential for expressing ideas clearly and understanding others in both everyday and academic contexts.

Spelling Bee Game

A Spelling Bee game is a competitive game that challenges participants to spell words correctly. It promotes vocabulary development, spelling accuracy, and boosts language confidence. By spelling words based on pronunciation and meaning, students enhance their ability to recall vocabulary. The game creates an engaging and interactive learning environment, which can motivate students to actively participate in language learning and develop a stronger command of word usage and structure.

Assisted tool

In this study, “assisted tools” included the Word Club Spelling Bee app, which uses interactive quizzes, real-time feedback, and personalized learning paths to help students improve their vocabulary and spelling. These tools support self-directed learning, allowing students to progress quickly and focus on areas that need improvement.

‘Word Club’ Spelling bee app game

The Word Club Spelling Bee app is a free mobile app designed to help students prepare for spelling competitions. It offers various study formats to improve spelling and vocabulary. The app includes 50 free study words with options for in-app purchases to access 4,000 words. It features voice recordings by Dr. Jacques Bailly and allows students to study on the go. In the app, students can do some exercises such as the "fill-in-the-blanks" game, where students listen to the pronunciation of vocabulary from the app and then have to type the correct letter. There is also a multiple choice game, where students have to choose the correct word after listening to the pronunciation of vocabulary. Lastly, Match Words game where student must select one of the word that match the meaning