

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, we discuss the definitions of vocabulary, how to teach vocabulary, and vocabulary mastery issues. This study also discusses application of this research.

A. The Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is an important component of English language learning, According to Brockman (1965), students have a significant responsibility to master the language's vocabulary once they have mastered the basic grammatical patterns—not all of them, but at least the high-frequency words or vocabulary they require. It indicates after acquiring grammatical patterns, students go on to vocabulary as the next phase of language proficiency. However, Ahour (2014) stated that the most important stage of learning a second language is increasing the vocabulary (L2).

1. The Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is all the words in a language, including nouns, adjectives, and verbs used in various linguistic contexts. Vocabulary is not only related to words found in dictionaries, but also includes new words that continue to evolve and are used in everyday communication. Understanding and mastering vocabulary helps a person improve their language skills, especially in understanding and producing sentences accurately in the target language. Many experts have different ideas about vocabulary. According to Touran (2014), words are the fundamental units of meaning that make up language; they are the building bricks from which phrases, paragraphs, and entire texts

are constructed. The knowledge of stored information regarding the pronunciations and meanings of words that are essential for communication is referred to as vocabulary.

2. Vocabulary Mastery

Anderson states that vocabulary mastery requires knowledge of word meanings and whether or not students can match a term they find with a synonym, explanation from a dictionary, or similar word in their native tongue. This section highlighted how vocabulary competency relates to students' understanding of English words. How effectively students comprehend English vocabulary and how well they can relate it to their mother tongue.

However, Richard in Meara (1996) makes an argument on the vocabulary mastery. Knowing a term means being aware of the potential that one may come across it in written or spoken language. Knowing what kinds of words are most likely to be associated with many terms. Because they are highly pushed to study high frequency terms because they will likely encounter them in the future, it demonstrates that students are afraid of whether or not they have them. Understanding a term means being aware of the restrictions imposed on its use due to differences in context and purpose. When students learn a new word, it is important for them to understand its limitations and how they can apply it in various contexts. Understanding a term means being aware of its underlying form and possible variations. It is advised that students understand the various forms of the term, such as norm, normal, ordinarily, normalness, and abnormality. Understanding a word refers

to being familiar with its numerous meanings. It is advised that students understand the word's synonym and antonym.

Knowing a word's basic meaning was not enough to master it. It involves knowing a web of associated knowledge elements. According to Nation (2022), gives a thorough explanation of what it means to be familiar with a word. This framework is crucial for assessing vocabulary mastery in a nuanced way, as it breaks down knowledge into various aspects, including form, meaning, and use. Two key components of vocabulary knowledge are particularly relevant: knowledge of synonyms and antonyms.

According to Crystal (2008), synonyms are words that share similar or identical meanings in a specific context. The greater part of synonyms include minor variations in connotation, register, or collocation, real synonymy is uncommon. For the example, while "commence" is more formal, "begin" and "commence" have the same basic meaning. Gaining an understanding of synonyms enables students to utilize language with more lexical variety and accuracy. According to Schmitt (2010), the ability to recall and use synonyms is a sign of a deepening vocabulary knowledge, moving from a basic level to a more advanced one. Knowing synonyms for common verbs (such as "mix" - "stir," "combine," and "cut" - "slice," "chop") helps students learn vocabulary for expressing hope and dreams s and comprehend and produce various and detailed instructions.

In English, antonyms are used to express contrast or opposition between two ideas, actions, or qualities. According to Murphy (2003), Words with opposing meanings are called antonyms. It ranges into a number of

categories, including relational antonyms (like buy/sell), complimentary antonyms (like alive/dead), and gradable antonyms (like hot/cold). Understanding antonyms promotes improved word recall and retention by strengthening the semantic network in the cognitive lexicon.

3. Problems in Learning Vocabulary

EFL students typically struggle to memorize and comprehend the vocabulary, especially Indonesian students. The fact that the students are disinterested in the instruction is one of the numerous variables that encourage it. When students are learning language passively—by listening to the teachers explain it—they become disinterested. Additionally, students hold relatively few dictionaries. It impacts how they can communicate in English.

There are still a lot of students with extremely poor vocabulary skills. According to Jaelani and Sutari (2021), the majority of Indonesian students still struggle with their command of English vocabulary, which is a significant issue that has to be resolved. They discovered that a number of factors contribute to student difficulties learning English. First, a lack of vocabulary prevents students from understanding the meaning of several English terms. Second, because of the traditional teaching methods, the media doesn't interest student interest in learning. Students will get bored and unfocused when learning English as a result, and they won't learn vocabulary as well as they could.

According to Azar (2012), a lot of students are afraid to use what they have learnt in a risky way. Students may believe they already "know the word"

after recognizing it in written or spoken form, but they may not be able to pronounce it correctly or use it appropriately in different contexts. The students' effective vocabulary is highlighted. Students must apply their vocabulary in constructive contexts, such speaking or writing, in order to advance in their vocabulary mastery. However, it is discovered that students are hesitant to use the terms they are familiar with to describe their ideas.

Additionally, there are additional variables that frequently cause students to struggle with vocabulary acquisition. According to Thornbury, the issues are:

1. Pronunciation

Words with sounds that students are not familiar with may be the most challenging for them to comprehend. According to research, learning a word becomes more challenging the harder it is to pronounce. For instance: conscience, turmeric, and poignant.

2. Spelling

Words like "foreign," "listen," "honest," and others that contain silent letters are especially tricky.

3. Length and complexity

Long words seem to be just as difficult to learn as small ones. But because high frequency terms in English are usually brief, learners are more likely to come across them, which increases their "learnability."

4. Grammar

The grammar of the words is another problem, especially if it differs from its equivalent in the original language.

5. Meaning

Learners are likely to be confused by words like "popular" and "famous" that have similar meanings.

B. How to Teach Vocabulary

A key component of language proficiency is vocabulary mastery, which includes both the capacity to use words correctly and appropriately in production (productive vocabulary) and the understanding of their meanings (receptive vocabulary). Therefore, teaching vocabulary effectively requires more than just memorizing lists and definitions. A multifaceted approach that incorporates explicit instruction, implicit learning, and plenty of opportunities for application in relevant circumstances is highlighted by modern pedagogical approaches.

1. Vocabulary Strategy

According to Nation (2022), a well-balanced vocabulary learning program should address four key strands: meaning-focused input (learning through listening and reading), meaning-focused output (learning through speaking and writing), language-focused learning (explicit teaching and study), and fluency development (using what is already known). This comprehensive view ensures that learners can recognize, recall, and use new words with confidence.

Direct instruction combined with rich contextual examples is one of the most recommended strategies for teaching explicit vocabulary. In order to do this, high-frequency or academically relevant terms must be chosen and presented using accurate definitions, illustrations, synonyms, antonyms, and

sample sentences. According to Sedita (2020), effective direct instruction follows a routine of introducing the word, providing a student-friendly explanation, presenting it in various contexts, and engaging students in activities that deepen their understanding. In order to create strong semantic links in the learner's mind, the Frayer Model, a visual organizer, asks pupils to define a word, list its attributes, and give instances and non-examples. Such strategies are crucial for building a foundational lexicon that learners can build upon.

2. Teaching Vocabulary Using Technology

Technology's integration into language pedagogy has transformed vocabulary learning by providing dynamic, individualized, and entertaining learning experiences. According to Stockwell and Hubbard (2021), technology allows for learning that is not confined to the classroom, enabling learners to access materials, practice, and receive feedback anytime and anywhere. Because it facilitates the dispersed practice and frequent exposure required for words to be committed to long-term memory, this flexibility is especially effective for vocabulary learning. exposure required for words to be saved in long-term memory.

In conclusion, successful instructional practices to support vocabulary are those that go well beyond rote learning. It needs to be paired with the direct teaching of words and rich example contexts, along with a balanced input-output-fluency balance. In addition, technology integration also provides a powerful means of facilitating such process in the form of

dynamic, multimodal and flexible learning experiences that allow learners to transfer words from receptive knowledge to productive knowledge.

C. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

In order to stay successful and competitive, educational institutions must continuously update their learning and teaching practices and policies due to the rapid growth of technology. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is a classification of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) that supports language learning through the use of mobile device technology, including tablets, smartphones, and other handheld devices. Without needing to be in a classroom or in front of a computer, MALL gives students flexible, autonomous access to language learning resources at any time and from any location. By using mobile devices, learners are more motivated and active in learning languages through various interactive and easily accessible applications. According to Valarmathi (2011), MALL is an approach that assists and enhances language learning through mobile devices with spontaneous and continuous access in various contexts of use. Subsequently, MALL continued to develop with various mobile applications specifically designed for language learning that provide immediate feedback and personalized learning support. MALL works to boost students' interest and involvement in the language learning process while also enhancing all language proficiency, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. MALL may be used offline or online at any time, it also makes independent learning more effective and efficient. MALL's benefits include its

adaptability to different learning methods, user-friendly technology, and the utilization of multimedia tools that enhance the language learning process.

D. Duolingo Application

1. The Definition

Duolingo is a widely recognized language learning application that integrates gamification in enhancing the acquisition language skills, especially vocabulary mastery. It was established with the slogan “free language education for the world,” designed to make language learning accessible, engaging, and effective. Duolingo offers learners interactive lessons that focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, facilitated through mobile devices or computers. The application employs Artificial Intelligence algorithms to personalize the learning experience, provide immediate corrective feedback, and adapt lessons according to each learner's progress and needs. June 2012 saw the launch of Duolingo. It serves as a platform for learning foreign languages. that is based on games. Exercises in grammar and vocabulary make up its two main parts. It was developed by Severin Hacker, PhD, and Luis von Ahn, PhD. With more than 50 million app downloads and more than 100 million users, Duolingo is currently the most popular online language learning resource.

According to Munday (2024), Duolingo is defined as an educational application that offers a broad selection of languages and is easily accessible as long as users have internet connectivity. It functions as a software tool designed to facilitate language learning in a flexible and user-friendly manner.

2. The Learning Procedure Using Duolingo App

The Duolingo app is incredibly user-friendly and straightforward. After downloading the Duolingo app from Google Play or the App Store, students must install it on their iOS or Android smartphones. The following are the steps to use the Duolingo app:

1. Download Duolingo application in Google play store, or App Store.
2. After installing it, students can select English from a selection of sixteen languages. There are fifteen full courses available in English.
3. The software then invites the users to "choose a daily objective" after they have decided the language they want to study. The daily objectives, which correspond to 5, 10, 15, and 20 minutes of practice per day, varies between casual to severe to insane.
4. After registering, the learner can click the "start" button to begin their first session without having to answer any additional questions or even register for the course.
5. Then the learners can choose one of the types of exercises of Duolingo application.
6. Duolingo's first exercise is a vocabulary selection picture exercise in which students are chosen to identify the correct meaning of pictures.
7. In a translation exercise, students switch between the languages they already know and the ones they wish to learn. There are two

alternatives to sentence translation. The learner must first select the appropriate translation for each word and then put those words into the appropriate phrase. Second, students need to type the correct translation according to the statement.

8. A listening exercise involves listening to a short phrase in the second language and typing it accurately. Listening activity in which students must listen to a sentence and type what they hear.
9. A speaking practice requires students to articulate what they have read. A speaking exercise is also included, in which students must read out a sentence in the language they are studying.
10. The concluding section includes a fill-in-the-blank activity. In a multiple-choice activity, students have to select the right response from two or three options.

E. Previous Studies

This study is situated within the context of several previous investigations that have explored the efficacy of Duolingo in enhancing vocabulary mastery. A quasi-experimental study by Zainudin (2025) provides compelling evidence at the secondary school level. Conducted with 10th-grade students at SMK Al-Kautsar Sriwijaya, the research compared an experimental group using Duolingo against a control group taught with traditional methods. The findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in the vocabulary mastery of the Duolingo group, as evidenced by their substantially higher post-test scores. This study positions Duolingo

as an effective and engaging innovative application for vocabulary acquisition.

Second, was written by Zamzami (2018), was to find out the empirical evidence of the effectiveness of using Duolingo application through students' vocabulary mastery. 58 eighth-grade students from MTs Negeri 3 Jakarta served as the sample for his quasi-experimental research design. While the control group got courses through a teacher's explanation, the experimental class used the Duolingo app as a tool. The results showed that the experimental class's post-test mean scores were 85.52 while the control class's were 70.69. To observe was 4.94 whereas t table was 2.00 or to observe $> t$ table on a degree of significance of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$), according to the results of statistical hypothesis testing using an independent sample t-test. Thus, H_0 was rejected and H_a was accepted.

Third, written by Habibie (2020), looks at how Duolingo can help students become more motivated to learn English. Forty fourth-year students at IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo who are all actively studying English participated in this study by filling out comprehensive questionnaires. The Duolingo program had a favorable effect on participants' enthusiasm for writing, according to the results, which comprised qualitative as well as quantitative methods. Therefore, the study suggests that by maintaining user involvement and motivation, Duolingo enables anyone to start learning a second language.

Fourth, the positive impact of Duolingo is further reinforced by research from Mujiarni et al. (2024). Their quasi-experimental study, involving 10th-

grade students at SMKN 2 Palangka Raya, also reported an increase in post-test vocabulary scores. This study emphasizes that the integration of technology, specifically Duolingo, is not only effective for vocabulary mastery but also crucial for boosting student engagement in the learning process.

Fifth, "The Use of Duolingo Apps to Improve English Vocabulary Learning," was written by Ajisoko (2020) and aims to improve second-semester students at Borneo University of Tarakan's vocabulary skills. Additionally, it seeks to encourage a deeper motivation for in-depth English study, especially in the area of vocabulary, which was made possible by the app. Using a pre-experimental design and a quantitative technique, the study produced encouraging questionnaire responses that highlighted an increase in learner motivation. In particular, The post-test mean score of 79.15 was greater than the pre-test mean of 57.45, indicating a considerable gain in vocabulary proficiency. This improvement had a statistical significance level of 0.687.

In summary, the existing body of research consistently highlights Duolingo's effectiveness on vocabulary across various educational stages, from junior high school to higher education. Building upon these quantitative findings, the present study seeks to extend the exploration by investigating how Duolingo facilitates vocabulary mastery among students at MAN 1 Kota Kediri.