

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

Students often face significant challenges in mastering new vocabulary, especially in understanding word meanings, memorizing new terms, and accurately pronouncing them. These challenges can hinder their fluency and confidence in using English productively. As innovations in teaching develop, several ways exist to overcome these challenges, one of which is storytelling. Storytelling not only helps in vocabulary acquisition, but also encourages student engagement and creativity. According to Abuzahra and Farrah (2016), storytelling serves as a powerful tool in EFL classrooms, improving students' language proficiency, cultural awareness and motivation. Saki and Samad (2021) emphasized that storytelling contributes to vocabulary development by providing repeated exposure to target words in authentic and memorable contexts. Similarly, Yang and Wang (2023) highlight that using stories in language teaching promotes better vocabulary retention through emotional engagement and contextual understanding. Storytelling has the strength of placing vocabulary in a coherent and comprehensible narrative, which helps students infer meaning and internalize usage patterns more effectively. By embedding vocabulary in a meaningful way, storytelling bridges the gap between memorization and communicative competence.

The use of storytelling has become a phenomenon in one of the junior high schools in Tasikmalaya city. Based on the observations of the researcher during the school-based internship, many students are still constrained by vocabulary when learning English in class. Still, there is progress when the teacher apply the storytelling method in class as for the implementation of storytelling consists of several stages as follows: 1) Preparation: The teacher chooses a story book according to the theme of the material being studied, understands the content of the story, and prepares media and classroom arrangements, 2) Organizing Seating Positions: Students are arranged in a formation that makes it easier for them to see and hear the story, 3) Opening: The teacher relates the story to the students'

experiences and recalls from previous stories to arouse interest, 4) Storytelling: The teacher tells the story with expression and interaction, encouraging students to comment, 5) Closing: The story ends with a conclusion and questions and answers to deepen students' understanding. Through this series, researchers are interested in exploring how the use of storytelling can enhance students' vocabulary mastery.

Storytelling has been a powerful pedagogical approach to address the vocabulary acquisition challenges junior high school students face. Unlike isolated word lists or facts out of context, stories naturally engage students and make linguistic inputs easier to remember, thus improving retention. Anggraeni et al. (2019) describe storytelling as delivering instructional content through oral narration enriched with images and sound effects. The storytelling technique appeals to diverse learning styles and maintains student motivation. Far from mere entertainment, storytelling provides a meaningful context in which new words are discovered, helping students remember and use them accurately. Satriani (2019) reported that storytelling can stimulate active participation in English lessons, bridge vocabulary gaps, and improve language proficiency. In addition, Purwasari and Nugraha (2023) observed that storytelling activities also promote fluency and pronunciation improvement: Repeated exposure to target words in various story contexts strengthens comprehension and supports long-term retention.

Previous research has explored storytelling as an effective method for improving vocabulary acquisition, particularly in primary and secondary school contexts. For example, through a quasi-experimental design, Noviya and Anugerahwati (2021) investigated the impact of storytelling on vocabulary acquisition among elementary school students. The results showed that the storytelling group significantly outperformed the control in term vocabulary acquisition and long-term retention. Similarly, Dewi et al. (2022) examined the role of storytelling improving elementary school students' vocabulary acquisition using a comparable quasi-experimental method. Baseline, endline, and retention tests were administered, and the findings showed that storytelling provided significantly better results than traditional instructional approaches. Students in

the experimental group showed significant improvement in vocabulary retention, underscoring the instructional value of this method. In a related study, Hartati and Ardila (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of using fairy tales as a form of storytelling to teach English vocabulary to eighth-grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 in Palembang. Using an experimental framework that included pre-test, post-test, and retention assessment, the study confirmed that students exposed to fairy tales performed significantly better than those in the control group in short-term and long-term vocabulary acquisition.

Based on previous studies, researchers have employed quantitative methods in varied settings and with diverse participants, primarily focusing on elementary school students to examine the effectiveness of storytelling as a strategy for improving vocabulary acquisition. These studies have utilized. However, there is still a lack of research exploring how storytelling facilitates vocabulary development, especially from students' perspectives and experiences. To address this gap, this research will be conducted at the junior high school level using a descriptive case study design. Rather than simply measuring outcomes, this study examines how storytelling contributes to students' vocabulary improvement, including the strategies employed, the aspects of vocabulary they develop (e.g., meaning, pronunciation, usage), and the impact of storytelling their engagement and retention.

## **B. Formulation of the Problem**

A research question addressed in this present study is "How do storytelling improve junior high school students' vocabulary mastery in English learning?"

## **C. Operational Definitions**

To avoid misinterpretation of this research, here are the operational definitions of each keyword:

<b>1.3.1. Storytelling</b>	: Storytelling is an activity that involves telling a story directly to students, presenting it in an interesting and creative way within the teaching
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and learning process that finally can improve the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students' vocabulary mastery.

**1.3.2. Vocabulary Mastery** Vocabulary is a collection of words about date, day, month, time, cardinal, ordinal, article, a (plural and singular), adjective, noun, prepositions, and animals that 7<sup>th</sup> grade students must master.

**1.3.3. Junior High School Students** The group of 12 - 13-year-olds who are in 7th grade.

#### **D. Aims of the Study**

This research examines how storytelling enhances junior high school students' vocabulary mastery in English language learning.

#### **E. Significance of the Research**

##### **1. Theoretical Use**

Theoretically, this research enriches the theoretical framework surrounding vocabulary acquisition and language pedagogy by supporting and extending Thornbury's (2002) principles of effective vocabulary learning (e.g., repetition, contextualization, and engagement) in storytelling.

##### **2. Practical Uses**

Practically, the study provides actionable insights for teachers and students. By utilizing storytelling methods, teachers can demonstrate how storytelling can be implemented as an effective classroom strategy to support vocabulary learning in a junior high school context, such as identifying specific techniques (e.g., story retelling, vocabulary mapping from stories, peer discussions) that help students retain and use new vocabulary, and also encouraging more engaging context-rich lessons that promote long-term retention, especially for vocabulary that is often challenging (e.g., abstract words or adverbs). For students, this approach improves their vocabulary

acquisition and fosters a positive attitude toward learning English by demonstrating that it can be both enjoyable and effective.

### **3. Empirical Uses**

Empirically, the research fills existing gaps and opens avenues for further study by offering insight into students' personal experiences, challenges, and strategies while learning vocabulary through storytelling and providing qualitative evidence from a descriptive case study perspective, which contrasts with the primarily quantitative focus of previous storytelling studies.